

SHIFTING GEARS

THE CHANGING MEANING OF WORK IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1920-1980

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS

INTERVIEWEE: John Heywood

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

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TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen A. Jenkins

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

MN: Today is April 1, 1989 and I'm here with George and John Heywood at John's home in ^{Woburn} ~~Wicoyte~~. Did I pronounce it right? Okay, uh I talked to George a little bit about his, the family background.

JH: Yeah.

MN: But I thought today since you're not so accessible to me I could, we could talk a little first start with some of your uh personal history. Your education and growing up in Gardner and then how involved you were with the company.

JH: Heh, well, uh I went through the Gardner school system until uh high school, period, and then went away to Phillips Academy in Andover. And, then I went to Northeastern University uh and I was in my second year when World War II broke out. And it was a five year course that I was involved in and the first year you stayed full-time in school, the succeeding four years it was on the cooperative plan where you were in school 10 weeks and then in industry 10 weeks, alternate weeks, year round, for the next four years.

MN: That's if you were majoring in industry or business?

JH: That was their program in all fields.

MN: And what was your field?

JH: Uh Industrial Engineering.

MN: And had you gone into that with an eye to going into the company?

JH: Yes. I previously uh both George and I had both worked summers, you know, while we were going to school, for the company. We, we were both kind of aimed toward it. And, uh but when uh it was evident that war was coming, uh a bunch of 40 of us petitioned the uh faculty at Northeastern to allow us to stay in school and forget the cooperative work. You know, to get as much of that in as we could before we were going to be pulled into the services. And, so there, there was a group of 40 in, in my, I mean in school for Industrial Engineering that uh were granted this privilege and, of course, the 40 kept shrinking every month, because a few would be taken in here, a few would be taken in there, but I was able to uh get a substantial part of my college uh, uh credits earned that way. And, then I, I had enlisted in the Marine Corp. in 1942 and they sent me to Dartmouth College under the V12 Program, the Navy Program. And, uh, while up there, in addition to taking the mandatory subjects that they uh required from a military standpoint uh you had an opportunity to take other subjects and I (coughs) uh went to the Thayer School of Engineering for some courses, went to Amos Tuck School of Business for others and due to uh, uh scheduling problems at Paris Island where we were to go for basic training uh the original period of four months that we were supposed to be at Dartmouth was expanded to eight. So the second four months, I was able to take all elective courses and I, and I put together enough credits so that I uh sent them back to Northeastern and I got my, my degree that way.

MN: In the electives did you stick with Engineering or?

JH: Yuh, uh, I, I stuck with, you know, Engineering and Business. I took all the courses at those two Graduate Schools, cause I, I completed everything else I needed. So it worked out fine.

MN: Was that something that you actively wanted to do? The, be involved with the company or it was just something predetermined?

JH: Well, it uh, it was my interest. I mean I wasn't uh, I didn't have an interest in Liberal Arts. I had more of an interest in mechanical things and, and I, so that's why I leaned toward Engineering, but Industrial Engineering, which is, you know, Business also. And, uh that's uh.

MN: And then you served actively in the Marines?

JH: Yes, I, yeah, I went into the Marine Corp. after on an active basis. Well, actually at Hanover, at Dartmouth I was, I was on active duty, but (coughs) that was my assignment. There were 1200 of us at there. And, then after eight months I went to Paris Island to uh Boot Camp, and then went from there to Camp LaJue in North Carolina for uh, oh what they call pre-OCS. And, then I went to Quantico through Officers Candidate School, and then after that went to Reserve Officers School. By that time I'd been commissioned. And, then after that was over I was uh, no we received orders to go into the field and I went to uh the west coast to uh, uh Camp Pendleton, that's near San Diego, a big Marine Base on the west coast. And from there I went to uh, uh the Hawaiian Islands and while down the, in the Hawaiian Islands, on the Island of Maui, the Fourth Division, uh the uh the Japanese surrender took place. So, then most of the Fourth Division had been in the field a long time, so practically the whole division went home, eh what was left of them and uh they had just come back from Iwojima so the, the casualty rate was horrendous. Well, that's when I joined. Well, that's when I joined the division and we were training to invade Japan, but that never came to be, fortunately, because of, well, the surrender. So then I was sent to uh North China, to uh the, I joined the First Marine Division (coughs). They were there to uh, uh disarm the Japanese divisions that were in North China. Well, that's what we did until uh that was accomplished and then, well, at that time

you came home on a point system depending how many months you'd served overseas and (coughing) uh, well, I eventually became eligible and I came back to the west coast and uh was processed, again at uh Camp Pendleton. I got trapped in a way, they, everybody naturally was anxious to get out and get home and uh so they said all you people that want to sever your relationship completely with the Marine Corp. right now uh you go over to this corner and you people that were, would like to stay in the Reserve, either active or inactive, you go over that side of the room. And, uh the fella said, uh "Now, I want you to remember that the people who want to get out completely we're going to have to send you to temporary duty at different posts around the country until you're all, all this can be processed, but if you're willing to sign into the Reserve, you'll be on your way home in two days." So all the suckers went over to one side, including me, and uh two days later I was on the way home. Uh, however, this all came home to roost when Korea broke out, I got recalled. By that time, of course, I was married and I had uh two children. It was a little bit of a different situation I was facing. I think we better come in this room. Uh, my specialty, what I was trained for uh was aerial observation, uh in which you uh perform out of (coughing) light-weight uh unarmed aircraft, like a piper cub, in fact, the early ones even had fabric skins on them, not metal, but your job was to fly at low levels and either take photographs or uh adjust artillery batteries, adjust their fire to get them on target and also adjust naval gun fire, if you were close enough to the coast or naval ships could fire into the, into the lines. And, they also directed uh air strikes from, you know, higher performance aircraft, either carrier based or uh land based, if that was feasible. Which was kind of an exciting specialty uh, but a little hazardous when you have a wife and two children (laughs). So I, I uh put in to transfer into an engineering group, which is somewhat in line with my education and it was, it was granted. So I

went out, I, I received orders to go to Camp Pendleton again, the second time around, where I was going to be uh, uh Assistant Post Engineering Officer, but when I got there uh casualties at Korea had been so heavy that they were feverish to get more bodies over there and uh one of the areas that had suffered a lot of casualties, well, was the aerial observation crews. So I found myself immediately reclassified back into that category and when I, uh we went over on a, on a crew ship and uh they had just uh landed a bunch of people by air on, in some airfields in the southern part of Korea and they'd had uh horrendous casualties, because these people, you know, were just coming out of replacement drafts, they had no ammunition or no weapons and uh the Army was quick enough to pick this up, so. So by the time I got there, uh we went ashore in a landing craft just like you were assaulting and you had uh, you know, you had all the ammunition, your weapons were charged and ready for anything. And, when I got there, of course, I, I was immediately assigned to the Air Observation Squadron and the, the fella who was the Chief Air Observer and which directs all the activities, he uh had been there some time and put in for a transfer to get out of that, because he, he also was married and, and had children. So he was transferred out, so I found myself as the, as the Chief Air Observer. I think we had uh, uh between 10 and 12 of us in our group and we had to, you know, we kept surveillance in the air from uh dawn to dusk, every day.

MN: And how long did Korea run?

JH: Well, I was in, when I got recalled, I was in for 17 months, but uh three of the months were in the States before I went over there, so, so that was the time. A little over a year.

MN: So that was what about 10 years after (both MN and JH talking,unintelligible).

JH: No, (.....unintelligible) it was uh '50, 1, 2 and uh.

MN: When you returned home after World War I.

JH: II (laughing).

MN: II. All right, World War II, I'm sorry. I meant II, but I said I (laughing), I'm sorry. Uh, I understand then that a lot of the people felt change by the experience of the war.

JH: Well, I think that's probably true, uh it was more true with uh, I, I think more tend to be true if you were in actual combat, which was not the case with me. See, the war was over while I was kind of still on the way and uh we had not uh joined them, so I never got into no real full-scale active combat. Oh, in North China we had gorilla attacks and things like that, but nothing, nothing major.

MN: And what did you do when you first got back to Gardner? Is it, that's where you came, yes?

JH: Yes. I went right to work at Heywoods then (coughs) in August of 1946.

MN: As what?

JH: Well, they had, they set up a program with the Federal Government, the Veterans Administration, had a program which they called on-the-job-training and uh the companies that engaged in this had to submit periodic reports, I forgot whether it was monthly or quarterly, I didn't have anything to do with, the company did it. But they had set up a program and they sent their program in and if it was authorized, then you proceeded and they paid half of uh the uh wages or compensation of the individual involved. And the company set up a program for me where I would uh spend so much time in every department of the factory uh somehow factory oriented, manufacturing, production oriented, not sales or financial or anything else, which was my interest. And, uh, uh.

MN: Similar to what George had done?

JH: Yes, yes, before, earlier. And I, it took, I started like in the, you know, the front end of the operation where they received the lumber and I

worked the lumber yard, I moved into the succeeding operations that and followed them all the way through.

MN: In wood and metal?

JH: In wood and metal, yes. Yeah.

MN: And how long would you stay in each of the departments?

JH: Well, it would, it depended on the size of them and the uh what, how much was there to digest. It was a little bit flexible in that area. Occasionally I'd, I'd get called in a department, when I was supposed to leave I couldn't leave, because they, maybe they needed help badly at that time or, so there was a little lag, but uh it took about a year and, a year and a half, I think, to get, to accomplish the whole program. We had about 40 departments at that time.

MN: And was it only you and George who went through this process?

JH: No, they had uh other uh ex-GIs that were in similar programs, there were some in the cost department, there were some in the uh transportation, seating, and grafting department, yeah. There might have been others, I really can't recall (some banging in background). No, we, it was not just the two of us that were, I think they probably had a dozen or 15 people in this kind of a program.

MN: And what was the ultimate objective?

JH: To get you thoroughly grounded in the uh whatever area of the business your program was in that, for to prepare you for uh, you know, a job of some sort. And the job I, I (coughs) uh was assigned to at the conclusion of this program, uh, was uh working along with the general superintendent of the plant uh who also had extra duties of labor-relations. And it was more than any one man should have, particularly in those days, the labor-relations took tons of time and uh it did take away from duties, know what I mean, duties of there, what you're there for is to run a factory and produce and ship quality

furniture. So they kind of split the responsibilities up and I got the labor-relations end of it uh which at the time seemed a little odd, because everything I had been doing was aimed at kind of the other end of (chuckling), of the job that this fella had. But uh it turned out to be uh, uh quite logical, because by going through every department to the extent I did there was hardly anybody in the whole plant that I didn't know by name and it was a great asset when you got into labor-relations.

MN: Would you actually, when you were going through this training program, would you actually work on machines, lets say hole boring or whatever?

JH: Yes. Oh, up to a point, uh I couldn't do it if it, if it was taking work away from a worker. Know what I mean, if somebody was out sick, I could go and do his job all day, no problem, but if, if there were, they only needed 25 men in a given department to do the uh work at the pace they wanted to do it at, uh I couldn't displace anybody, I guess that's the best way to put it.

The union uh agreed to the program, well, on that, with that provision. So I, but I never had any trouble on that score at all. Actually, the first incentive job that I went on, I was tailing a big machine and actually it was the union steward of the department was the guy feeding the machine and I took off the back end of it, and it was the dirtiest job I think the, and then the department resaw, where you put lumber through on edge if it was an inch and a half thick when it came out, it was two pieces, you know, uh 5/8 thick or something. And, uh, but I never had any, any trouble uh in any instance in any department with, with that uh with getting along with people or uh.

MN: They didn't tease you being part of the family or?

JH: No, no. A couple of comical things happened. Uh I remember being in one department and I hadn't been in there an hour, when the union steward came up and said uh, "Have you, how long have you been working here?" And I, I told him and he said, "Uh did you, did you get your automatic raise?" Which is

part of the union scale system. And, uh I hadn't gotten it and uh I didn't want to tell him that uh flat out, so I said, "I understand it's in the works." And he said, "But you haven't got it yet, you're way over due." So he, you know, went to management on my behalf to (chuckling) see that I got a raise. Which is kind of comical.

MN: Did you?

JH: Yes, sure, sure. It, it was something that had been entirely overlooked, probably because I wasn't uh, I was in the factory working, but I did not belong to the union.

MN: That's what I was going to ask you, if you were a union member?

JH: NO.

MN: But he treated you as though you were, this?

JH: Yes, he didn't know any different. In fact, I seriously wonder if he knew what my name was at that point, because I'd only been in the department like an hour or two when this happened. Frank Whittakus was his name and I remember it well. It was funny.

MN: And could you sit and have lunch with the people then, when you were in the departments?

JH: Oh, sure. Yeah. I usually went home for lunch, cause I was married by then. I usually went home for lunch every day, cause it was that close. But uh, you know, I never had any problem of communications or getting along really.

MN: When you were going through this process, too, did you know that you'd end up with the labor end of it.

JH: No, no I didn't.

MN: So that was a bit of a surprise?

JH: Yes, it was. But I, as I told you, you know, there were certain restrictions I had to live with on this program, and so you got to quickly uh understand some of the concepts of, of union operation.

MN: Such as?

JH: Well, the uh, uh the, the way the union organized the plant and I think most plants are the same, they uh, they elected a uh stewards, every department had its own steward, union steward. And in the early days, well, the union was uh had quite some strength, uh the union steward uh, uh ran the department with the foreman. I don't mean, I don't mean in terms of production schedules or that kind of thing, but any kind of relationship between the uh the company and the employees usually involved the steward to some degree or other. See, a lot of our work was on incentive and (coughs) the rates were set by time study and uh it was the rule rather than the exception that, that the first rate issued was accepted. I mean it was always an attempt to, you know, get the rate a little higher and uh the time setting man had quite a job on his hands uh make sure he wasn't being taken in the (....unintelligible) say nothing of, of uh getting a rate a little sweeter at the end. Uh the steward, uh, you know, took (banging in background) part in that procedure.

MN: And the steward wouldn't necessarily be a foreman or someone else, they'd just be a shop worker?

JH: Oh the steward could not be a foreman. Could not be a management representative.

MN: (Someone talking in background,unintelligible). But then they became equal to management in a sense.

JH: Well, uh.

MN: Is that what you're saying?

JH: They did in the, in the sense that often times the, the steward would, would kind of be in the middle between the foreman and the man. Particularly, if the man asked for it. He had that right under the union agreement, if there was a dispute, if anything, employee had any kind of a grievance, he was

first supposed to take it up with his foreman on a man-to-man, one-to-one basis, but that got changed and the steward was interjected into that process. So the stewards stature, you know, kind of grew a little bit through this. And it, it became more the rule that the steward was in on all these things, even if a man objected to a piece rate that had been set uh and the company agreed to re-study it, take a second time study, more often than not the steward was present when this thing, the time study, the second one.

MN: Why did they move from just man-to-man negotiation, foreman/worker, and interject the steward?

JH: I think it was uh I uh effort to get stronger control by the union over Heywood, over the employee work force. See, he, the steward uh the steward's stature grew with this being included and the employee came to go more to the steward than he went to his foreman, which from a management standpoint was not good, uh it, it, whereas it added to the steward's stature, it took away from the foreman's stature. And, uh we didn't think this was healthy, but uh it was something that had been agreed to, so they lived with it.

MN: Did you know while you were in the service of uh activities at the plant, particularly, labor kinds of relations?

JH: Yes.

MN: Like the advent of the union?

JH: Well, that happened uh close to the beginning of World War II and uh, but I had only worked for the company summers and, at that point and the only way I really uh knew much about what was going on at the plant was with, you know, I'd get letters. My dad worked there and he wrote me quite often and uh he kept me posted on some things going on. Also, shop news was published in a miniature edition. I don't know if you've seen one of our, which is mailed to all, all the servicemen, all men in service that had ever worked at the company from Gardner. And I used to receive that monthly. And it was, it was

shrunk way down and uh sometimes by the time you'd get it (...unintelligible), you didn't have to read, but it kept you up to date on things. Of course, the, eh Carl stayed away from uh, you know, uh reporting details on uh labor relations, he more kept toward the social family uh unity that we'd, that was trying to.

MN: Yeah, I was curious that he did that out of, out of choice or was that a company policy or...

JH: Well, I, I would say uh, you correct me if you think I'm wrong, I would say Carl had a rather free hand after, as editor of the shop news. I don't think that uh management really uh dictated pretty much to him.

MN: So he could have reported more details about union activities?

JH: Yes, I tell you what, I say he could have. You know, when there was something significant it would be in there. But he's uh probably right, I mean, all these people in the service uh they don't really, got other, other interests on the whole, (...unintelligible), (banging in background, very loud), mind at the time than worrying about somebody's grievance in the car seat, welding or (laughing). But, you know, when there was a, a new contract agreed to or some other activity, you know, of major interest that certainly was reported.

MN: Than how did you understand why the union came into the company?

JH: Well, of course, I was not on the scene at the time, but uh I would answer that by saying that it was part of uh oh the national trend, oh probably stemming from the National Labor Relations Act being passed, which uh gave the unions a uh a much easier road to come in and organize the company. And, uh they came, they came into Gardner eh, some of this time I was in Gardner, it was before the war really, and they made uh attempts to organize different plants, mostly the smaller uh weaker, if I can use that word, plants

that weren't uh financially too sound or uh were not doing well for one reason or another. Of course, by that...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE A

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

JH: What's the last thing we were discussing?

MN: Uh, uh.

JH: Old age is taking its toll.

MN: (Laughing) Ha Ha, I think it's just down hill.

GH: About the union coming into the plant.

JH: Oh, yeah, yeah. Of course, another thing that happened is the company gradually got into more and more war work. Uh, President Roosevelt led the charge uh from uh the Office of the Presidency to, to push labor management committees and, in industry that were doing war work, yeah. There was also a tremendous uh a pressure on the companies that were involved in war work and at one point in Gardner I think we were more than 90% involved.

MN: Oh, you were talking about the smaller companies, the union getting in there and organizing them up.

JH: Yes, yes. I'll get back to that after this point. Now, there first attempts at organizing in Gardner were, were quite amateurish. Now, it was like 10 years before in the auto industry there was a lot of uh, quite a bit violence and uh threats and all those early tactics that, you know, are the long law.

MN: That existed in Gardner?

JH: Yes. There was and it worked both ways, uh, uh the union created some and some companies that were undergoing uh an organizational attempt to, they per, they perpetrated some also. Eh there was nothing major, there was nobody killed or anything like that.

MN: What was the first fear? On the part of the companies themselves.

JH: That uh they would lose some measure of control over their own operation. And, and it was a real fear, too. And uh so a lot of these early organization attempts uh they weren't successful and they uh resulted in uh unfavorable publicity, but uh looking back on this probably a lot of these early attempts on some of these smaller other companies were, was nothing but kind of a dress rehearsal. Eh the union had to uh get money, they had a very basic need to, to exist, and uh here's Heywood-Wakefield sitting here with two thousand plus employees in the Gardner plant at that, in those days. And I believe that the highest union membership that existed was in the area of uh maybe 4,000, if it was that high, so you see over half of their uh monthly income came from employees of Heywood-Wakefield. And that was the plum, of course, what they were after was to get to organize Heywood-Wakefield. We were the biggest and uh we were uh an attractive target. In some ways we were not an attractive target, because we probably uh had the uh I'd say without any doubt we had the uh the best fringe benefit program, at that point in time uh, of anyone, and uh the company was very maternalistic.

MN: In my books to ask you about.

JH: And, uh, oh just as one example uh, way back in the, I believe it was in the '30s the company uh came up with this uh plan of, of providing a paid up for \$1,000 life insurance policy, which an employee was given this policy when he retired and it was payable on his death to his uh, uh designated beneficiary. And the aim, the aim of it was cut final expenses. Yeah, and, you know, when this was first started it was, you know, it was a whole new deal and uh nobody else was doing it and uh a \$1,000 at that time would do the job, you know. Uh, this proved to be a, a horrendous millstone around the company's neck financially, because eh with, with 2,000 employees then eh you had a, going at a potential of \$200,000 uh right there plus uh all the people

20 years later, 30 years later that had gone through this proc, process and we had uh ex-employees, you know, at 90 years old. So the thing just ballooned up and this wasn't only at Gardner, this was at the Albany, Michigan plant and even in the Canadian plant. So when you added it all up it was like your, you know, a million dollars cost hanging over the company's head that at some time had to be satisfied.

MN: Was that something the company instituted or the union pushed for?

JH: No, this was put in effect long before the union ever was on the scene. It was part of the what I'd say, sort of a family paternalistic uh outlook, as was the uh social club and uh, uh the annual corn roast which was a tremendous affair that was supposedly for company employees and their family, but in essence probably half the city of Gardner would have attended these things. Like we had a corn roast with 700, 7500 people. Everybody that was anything in the community was asked for some reason or other, you know, the, all the city officials, fire department, police department and uh.

MN: Well, let's, let's talk about that before we go back to the union coming in. Uh, what do you mean by paternalism?

JH: I mean uh they were, the company was very uh, uh protective of its employees. They thought a lot of their employees and uh, and I would say without any question we, you know, in the heyday we probably had by far the best work force in the area uh and the company appreciated it.

MN: Did this feeling of paternalism stem from the fact that it was a family owned business, do you think?

JH: Well, uh I don't know that that's the case as much as the Heywood-Wakefield Company tried to uh, uh project themselves as being one family, the whole company. Uh.

MN: That was a conscious.

JH: It was an effort, yeah. And it was felt to be good business, plus the fact that it was a hell of a lot of fun. And, uh this did, wasn't restricted to just factories uh, we had sizeable sales forces, they were all considered part of the family and.

MN: When did the social club start?

JH: I can't tell you that, because it was uh before my time with the company.

MN: In the '30s probably then.

JH: Yeah, I would say probably late '30s. The only way I can tie it in is I know they had a piano in the social club rooms that, that my father-in-law donated.

MN: Oh, there was an actual room in the company for this.

JH: Oh, it was on, it was not in the company property, it was a separate building, it was very close to the company. As you go down Central Street from the company it was the first uh building on the left. I don't know if its there anymore.

MN: The Carbone Building?

JH: Yes, yes, yes. It was the first part of that, the first part of that, the front doorway closest to the office. And, uh that was available to the employees, there was a custodian there to take care of it and it was uh all this was all at the company expense, but it was just, it was all part of the program, you know, to make people feel, well, that they belonged and that they're happy and.

MN: And the idea, I guess, is the happy worker is a productive worker?

JH: Sure, sure.

MN: Did it work?

JH: Yes, it worked. But that along with a lot of other so called fringe benefits that we had before the advent of the union uh, when they came on the scene and won a representation election and were the certified bargaining

agent for the, for the employees. Uh, in many other cases other plants, you know, these would be the kind of things they would go after in, in contract demands, but we already had all this. So I, when I say we I'm talking about this company management. We had these things and uh so that when they conducted their organizational campaign, you know, they were going to get more, get more, get more, so there wasn't any time wasted on what we already have. The time was going to be spent on what we want to get, so we were right from the outset kind of at a bit of a disadvantage, because of all these things that had been done before. I, I'm talking in terms of cost, you know, the cost to the company for all these things.

MN: But the people had to vote to accept the union, didn't they?

JH: Yes, they did.

MN: And they...

JH: Yes, it was an organizational campaign uh and at that time, of course, the company was piling heavily into war work uh. They had production schedules to meet uh the war department eh, you know, had representatives right in the area that, in fact, we had govern, we had ordinance people right in the plant, that was their total sole assignment, to be sure that, you know, production schedules were maintained, quality levels were maintained. And, uh both the Army and Navy, yes, and the big thing was you can't rest on a schedule or any circumstances, so, well, labor organization threatened a possible work stoppage. The company did not put up all that much resistance to it. Uh, mostly due to the fact of all these (.....unintelligible) be sure nothing went wrong. In fact, I have been told by employees uh long afterwards that some of them were teed off that the company didn't resist union organization more than they did. There's one they, uh you had a right to, see, they conducted a by ballot and uh the company had an, has an opportunity under the Allerby Act, I don't know, the National Labor Relations Act, to uh,

uh know dispute it or uh, uh there were other recourses the company had. But this was not taken advantage of, because everybody was there to, to keep things going, to keep the wheels going. And the government was practically sitting at the table with you to be sure that this didn't, that no stoppages did take place. This was even more evident uh, you know, after the union was in and when contract renewals would come up and there might be a wide area in dispute between management and the bargaining committee uh and Uncle Sam was there at the table.

MN: But they must have felt that the union would help prevent work stoppages, the Government. Did it?

JH: Uh, no, I, they, the thrust of the Government was to uh get business to accede to demands of the union uh probably to a much greater degree than management would do on its own. And, uh, uh in those days everything was cost plus or a lot of the contracts were cost plus, you, when you got a job uh you at the conclusion of it, you got all your figures together and you showed them how much the whole job cost and there was an allowable profit margin. Uh, and later they put in what they called contract negotiation, if you made more than the allowable amount, you had to pay it back. That was Robert Stacks profits, you know. But, uh the point I'm trying to make is that it was difficult and there was quite a, oh a pressure put on the company to ensure that there wasn't a strike or wasn't a work stoppage. And the bulk of uh of this pressure they say was on, on management rather than on labor. Uh, I suppose to some degree its the same old thought, you know, there's a big company, you know, its been around for a hundred years and its going to be around for another two hundred, what can happen. And the company acceded to a lot of these things which solved the problem for the moment, you know, we did have a tremendous, tremendously fine record of uh Government production, war production. Five Army/Navy awards, you know, Gardner, five awards for

excellence. Yeah, that's in Gardner alone right during the war. The other plants got them, but uh.

MN: Did the, would the management have seen the vote to accept the union as a vote of uh lack of confidence in the company, by the employees or?

JH: Well...

MN: Did it hurt the paternalistic feelings?

JH: Yes, it did. Uh, it did to some extent. Now, it made uh I know of a person in the company, at the time, I think took this as kind of a personal uh affront, because he uh, uh liked to think of himself as being real, real close to everybody and in those days he used to go out in the plant a lot and.

MN: Richard Greenwood.

JH: Yeah, he knew a lot of em by first name uh, but the, you know, the more the union made, the more the union was representing the employees and the uh higher the demands became, it, it automatically put the company and the union on and, and the workers were kind of thrown by the wayside in this paternalistic feel, attitude. Because the union uh has the sole right to bargain for its employees, management cannot do it anymore, once an election is won by the union. They are the people you talk with. You cannot, it's illegal to talk with your, your people and, and try to make any changes in wages or fringes or anything. You have to do, they, they're the sole bargaining unit, bargaining agent, the sole bargaining agent. So, uh, it automatically made for a change in the feeling, it, it had to uh.

Unfortunately, uh at times the uh this feeling uh, well, over the years I could say it, it uh this change definitely did come into affect the employees, but it was, it's really the unions responsibility because they, they took the prerogatives away from the employees. An employee couldn't do much himself and I think there are some that wonder why, why this change had taken place. Why don't you talk to us anymore, why don't you. We used to talk together,

now we don't talk together. But you couldn't. And we used to try to get around it one way or another, but that was, it was difficult.

MN: Why do you think they, the people felt the need to have a union?

JH: I think it was just a, a, it was the wave of the times. The union organization was, you know, uh had gotten this big lift from uh from the Federal Government and LRA and they were just organizing fast and furious in all fields. And the, the fact that it was war time, a lot of war work going on, a lot of it cost plus, the earnings of companies were up, good Lord ours was. And, uh that was kind of a nice change to, I mean, the company had a terrible time during the crash, you know, in the late '20s and uh they really uh hadn't made uh really holy satisfactory profits probably until this war effort did come in. They were still recovering from uh the crash.

MN: Although, it seemed to me that Heywood-Wakefield suffered less in the depression than many other companies.

JH: Well, they did because of one thing. Uh, before you look at what Heywood-Wakefield was in say 1925, good Lord they had facilities all over the country and in Canada and uh not particularly manufacturing, but warehouses and uh sales organizations and uh assembly plants. Assembly plants, yeah, we shipped parts and they were put together in these warehouse operations/assembly plants and uh the company's survival uh really was due to the fact that uh they were able to cut off all these multi-number of fingers that were sticking out and pull everything back to the body which was Gardner. And, uh Gardner survived although the entities didn't, like Wakefield went down to a fraction of its size, you know, and we even uh, of course, this was before unions, we even offered, not we, the company even offered uh people work in Gardner when the Wakefield plant actually closed. And, uh a lot of the Gardner employees were relocated at the company expense to Gardner. And some of them were there practically to the day it was stopped.

MN: Yeah, I met a few of them.

JH: Some of the families still wouldn't leave Gardner. Yeah.

MN: Packy Dunnagan, Patrick Dunnagan.

JH: Oh, yes. Yup. But up until the crash the company had made good money and they did have a large surplus going into the depression, yeah.

(.....Unintelligible) by the time, by the late '30s that surplus was all out of there.

MN: But you didn't have to lay off huge numbers of people during the depression, did you?

JH: Uh, I'm not really qualified to answer that. Uh, I know wherever possible uh jobs were, were provided for people, but I'm sure there must have been a lot of people because there were so many, so many different physical locations that, that were manned with people and uh like uh Baltimore, Buffalo, Kansas City, Portland, Oregon, and there were more than that, San Francisco. San Francisco, big building in New York City, (...unintelligible), uh, Chicago.

MN: Then when you started with the labor relations, that was more or less your prime responsibility? In '47 would have been probably?

JH: Yeah, '47 or '8, yes. Yes, it was.

MN: What.

JH: Uh.

MN: What I wouldn't have any really clear idea of what it is you were supposed to do.

JH: Well, uh, by that point the union had been in existence for at Heywood-Wakefield for probably now six years. And, uh this was the days when the union was really strong uh they had uh, they had a, a leader in the Gardner office, Thomas Banal. He was an ex-furniture worker from one of the factories, not ours. Uh, Tom was a uh was a kind of a crusader uh he was a

good guy, but you had to remember where his heart was and he had a job to do and uh you had to recognize that or you'd, you'd go crazy (laughing). He had a job to do, but he also had to recognize that I had one to do. And, uh, I think there was one point when uh, uh I think the Union International Office felt that uh Tom had lived in Gardner all his live and knew a lot of people and I know they'd greet him by his first name. There were a lot of people at Heywood-Wakefield. I think they had the feeling that he was too close to the scene, they'd be inclined to be a little on the easy side with old Gardner buddies, so they picked up a man that they moved into a number two spot beneath Tom Gold and his name was Lubert Taylor. And he was a furniture worker in uh the south shed, South Ashburnham plant, Whitneys and uh he came in and he was a firebrand when he first came and it had just seemed to us, I can't say this is true, but it seemed apparent to us that he was brought in to do just that and, you know, he could, he would come in and it was like a vaudeville act. Uh, you know, he would pound the table and oh I can see his face red as a beet, you know, and, and whale on this and that and the other thing and when you'd get into a real impasse then Tom would come around and say something that would kind of mullify it a little bit, so uh that's the way they seemed to operate. Uh, and the, the two of them were like we had a, and in those days we had a meeting with the bargaining committee weekly and, and.

MN: Throughout the year?

JH: The whole year, every year, every week. It was set for a certain time on Thursdays, 10:00, you met with the work, well, you met with the two principals from the union office and myself uh when I got in the picture, and the, the chief steward of the shop, which was one man for a long time and then they decided the place was so big they needed two on each side of the street. And I always took a secretary and I took, she took copious notes of uh what was, what transpired at these meetings. And what the meetings usually involved was

uh the grievances that had been submitted since the previous meeting and what had you done to eh there was an organized procedure in that union agreement for how grievances were to be resolved that involved six or seven steps. The first of which was the individual has the grievance has to talk with his foreman one-to-one on the things, this and that, every effort was to be, should be made to settle it right then and there. But uh that wasn't always wanted in the first place. A lot of these grievances were, were uh more or less created so there would be a constant backlog of stuff so that you had to have these meetings and, of course, this kind of increased the stature of the union and the steward, and particularly the shop chairman, and took away from the foreman down on the floor that had the responsibility not only for getting out production, but now he had the responsibility for labor relations at his level. And, uh a lot of these foremen resented, you know, the departmental steward taking on the responsibility that he did and this eh sometimes would uh, uh result in a, a situation where the foreman uh often wouldn't make much attempt to really settle it, he would just stand fast on the position that he took in the first place and that's it. And, uh if you want to, if you're not happy take it to the next step and that let him out. That, that was one of the things I used to fight continually, because once it got into the next two or three steps, then it always became a big blown up deal, usually way out of proportions. Uh, that was uh, that was just part of a I guess the psychology of it.

MN: What kinds of grievances would people have?

JH: Oh, everything from uh grieving about a piece rate that had been set not being high enough uh to uh the mens room not being kept clean enough or light bulbs needed to be changed that weren't because they were burned out. And the lot of, lot of grievances involving seniority. Seniority uh I always tried to maintain seniority will rule in cases where uh, uh qualifications were quoted,

but it should not rule if they're not, but, of course, this was totally against the union concepts. Seniority was everything with them. And its a, you know, its one of the things closest to their heart, so it was uh that was always a difficult thing. And when you'd have a lay off in a department, there was a procedure, you know, the, the usually the guy at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of seniority in that department would be the first to go, but occasionally you'd get a guy that you'd just hired who had exceptional talent, maybe a talent in that way that, like in the welding room, if you hired a brand new guy that was a say he'd just gotten discharged from the Navy that had uh certification for uh, you know, all kinds of specialty welding that nobody in that department had, the union would say if he's the last man in and you have to lay somebody off, he's the first one that would go. And I used to say no, that isn't right, this guy has talents that nobody else in that department has and he should he...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE B

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

JH: Because uh there were, there were a lot of grievances for a few years involving uh, uh people that didn't belong to the union. And under the first agreement uh an employee did not have to belong to the union if he didn't want to. He could elect right then and there, when the union first came in, first got certified, uh that was a I believe a condition of a National Labor Relations Act that the union couldn't force employees to join, they had a right to elect whether they would or not. And, uh a lot of them initially made that election and then, of course, the union started to work on them. Uh, they wanted to consolidate the strength of their position, they also wanted the money. Let's face it, they had bills to pay. And, uh.

MN: What about uh people complaining at, I heard that one of the major problems seemed to be favoritism in the plant. That they felt quite the opposite of what you just said. Someone who wouldn't be qualified, especially in the case of women, I don't know why I use the word sexual harrassment, but they'd certainly be certain favoritism, or even with men and they felt it was not fair advantage this person had, it was simply a, I don't know what else to call it, favoritism or.

JH: Well, I can't say that there wasn't some of that uh to some degree. Uh, and I don't mean to uh, uh berate our foremen at all, but uh the foreman's main job up until unionization took place was to get the work out and keep the quality up and to have everything come off on time and, and uh that was a pretty good full-time job as it was. Now, along comes unionization and he's asked to get into the grievance settling uh procedure and at the same time his uh authority is being deleted a bit by the presence of the union steward who gets in on everything, so everything takes more time to get done and I think that there was a natural inclination for a foreman to pay more attention to the people who were nice to him and not somebody who was barking at his back all the time. And that uh that did result in some, some of this uh charges of uh favoritism and it just, it's human nature to uh to tend to try to keep the people around you that are helping you not hurting you. Uh, there were some cases of this that went I know way beyond reason. As an example, there was a department where uh a foreman and there was an assistant foreman also in this department, and uh they uh gave a man a week off which was according to the contract for a certain failure to perform that they claimed existed. In fact, it was, it was uh poor workmanship and I investigated the grievance, that was my first step in these things. If it got reduced to a written grievance, which I think was step 3 in the grievance procedure, then uh that thing already led, at that point it got down into the union office and they wrote up

the grievance form and sent it up and I'd take the grievance form and I'd go down and I'd talk with the foreman. And he would tell me his side of the story, then I'd go talk with the man and I would get, get his side of the story and usually if something had gotten to a point that it was written up as a formal grievance there was substantial arrogance. If they were apart and uh, uh in one particular instance I remember, the foreman and this assistant foreman just plain did not have the right information. I, I never could determine where they got it, but the poor workmanship that was attributed to this individual was a job that the guy never did, somebody else did it, but this fella was a kind of a thorn in their side, he was always agitating. He wasn't by any means the best performer in that, in that department on his assigned work uh yet he thought he should be getting a, the top pay grade. This was an hourly paid department and uh he was no where near the top grade and he thought he should be and nobody else did. But, eh, you know, when you find something like that out eh it's a tough situation, because you have got to, you got to try to keep the moral of the organization together, but you've also got to be fair and if the guy didn't do the job uh somebody was pretty dead wrong on it. And in this particular case we uh we severed the employment of the assistant foreman because he, as it turned out, was the, the guy that really engineered this thing.

MN: Wouldn't people also just bypass this and go marching into Dick Greenwood's office?

JH: Very seldom. He uh he liked to say that he had a completely open door policy and anybody could come into his office any time they wanted. Well, that's a nice thing and uh, and uh I suppose it's very democratic, but once you have union organization that's impossible, you can't do that any more. Uh, he did and it, it made for problems.

MN: Oh, so, in fact, it was incorrect, because it violates union rules and harmed several complaints.

JH: That's correct.

MN: Oh, that's funny.

JH: Yeah, but he uh, lets face it he'd been there a long time, he'd been in the job as President a long time and he knew everybody and if somebody appeared at his door, I suppose its a little difficult to say I'm sorry I can't talk with you. But that's what should have happened really.

MN: Did the kind of grievances people had change over time?

JH: Uh, no I don't think so. Uh, if, I kind of have to pick 1956 as a, as a changing point. Everything kind of was going up hill, the union was getting stronger, yeah, they had stronger control over the employees. Uh, we didn't get rid of the or, or we didn't finally finish all of the Government work until about 1954. See, we just started to get out of it after World War II, Korea comes along and there were overruns, you know, that went for like two or three years after World War II was concluded.

MN: Oh, really.

JH: Oh, sure. I mean you had contracts to produce stuff and they just didn't cut it right off, you finished up your contracts. And, uh so that we were just getting rid of World War II contracts, along comes Korea and you've got another bunch of them.

MN: But before we entered '56 uh didn't, I, I was under the impression that contracts sort of ended and lots of people had to be laid off after World War II. The war production workers.

JH: Well, that's, that's probably true. Uh, by the time I got back to the plant, I'd say the, the uh, uh employee work force on the, in the bargaining unit was probably about uh fourteen to fifteen hundred, and it had been 2,000. But many, many of these were women, well, because the men weren't

there to begin with and uh, uh the men came home, the women went home to be with them. So it wasn't all uh just being laid off. In a lot of cases uh well, the gals had had enough of this for awhile and uh, uh the husband was home and he could earn the money. And in a lot of cases there were kids to be thought of and everything, but yes the work force did went, did go down probably uh, probably 500. Uh... The uh, eh, eh, there were some problems in the company, uh in a company like Heywood-Wakefield that didn't have very many women up until the point of the war and it was a different thing handling a, you know, a work force with a lot of women. In the first place, you didn't have any women's toilets and a very basic thing, but had to provide all them. And, uh it meant a lot of changes and that was uh it was an experience for some of us who (...unintelligible) people to uh to know how to uh control women in the, in the work place. They, not that we didn't have any, we, we've had women in the company for good God I've seen pictures of them in books like the completed century and others that just shows women, you know, 40 years before this, but uh not in the volume. Like there was some departments, eh you were more involved in them than I was. Before I came home from the service there were some wom, departments almost wholely women.

GH: Yeah, like the bomb fuse department. Yeah, it wasn't whole, but it was almost 95% women, you know, they're at long tables assembling things, you know, you put your part in and pass it to the next woman and the next woman and it was pretty difficult for some of our foremen and superintendents to, to uh manage these departments with say 90% or better women. Some turned out to be good at it and some just couldn't take it, they'd have women squabbling, you know, a lot of petty, well, more petty things than there were with men. Some of these departments, you know, a guy like (.....unintelligible) John was one of them.

JH: Yeah, he was a natural at it.

GH: And Guy Miller is the superintendent that was good at it, terrific. But some of the others found it pretty difficult trying to deal with all these women, their petty little problems, you know. So you uh, so a lot of changes had to be made.

MN: But a number of them stayed after the war. I would assume your work force had more women after the war than before.

JH: I'd say that's a fair assumption. Of course, after the war, I mean along comes Korea and we went in the production of bomb fuses again (laughing).

Right back in the same old stage, you know, we had uh many, many women after, I would say probably at least 60% of them or two-thirds of them uh were somehow involved with Heywood-Wakefield. Either their husband worked there or they had worked there before or their sister works there, or a brother or a father did, the husband, so it, it was uh. There weren't a whole lot of problems at the time I was there, except that you did get involved in some, some horrendous arguments. There were even a few cases where nationality conflicts with women that I don't remember with men so much. Uh, an isolated example, uh my uh a Polish woman and a French woman. The two women doing the exact same job, they're the only two women doing this job, and they had such an intense dislike for each other that one always ate her lunch in the, on the job, the other one always went home. So when that one came back from going home for dinner, or lunch at noon, she'd find that her tools had been painted with glue. You know, this kind of petty stuff and so the other one puts in a grievance, and you have to go uh fiddle around with that kind of a thing, try to get it settled and well, she provoked me. Well, what did she say. Oh, I'm Italian, you know (laughing).

MN: Did they have much ethnic conflicts, people lets say.

JH: I wouldn't say a lot, but there were cases of it.

MN: Well, even conflict like Fins hanging together, Poles hanging together.

JH: Well, I think probably more so with the, the Fins. They're very clannish. And uh, uh there was a, a division of our company called Ashcraft, they made uh, you probably know what it is, it was rattan and they couldn't get more rattan during the war, it was uh ash dowels and they burned a ring around them to simulate rattan, with a, a torch. And, uh that was very heavily Scandinavian, that, that whole department. Uh.

GH: Including, including the, some of the foremen like some.

JH: Yup.

GH: (.....Unintelligible).

JH: Yup. And, uh, uh Leonard Ingstrom, he had a silver tongue (...unintelligible). They were all getting ridiculous. Swedish, there were a lot of Fins.

MN: Would say there was a Scandinavian foreman could he kind of make sure his department was pretty much Finnish or Swedish? I mean it happened in the textile mills in Lowell all the time. You'd see the weaving room would be all (.....unintelligible) and Greeks, the spinning room would be all another ethnic group.

JH: Well, this, of course, uh I think there's a good chance that this was probably true uh back in the days where a foreman was a, was a contractor. He hired his own help. This was many, many years back. But.

MN: In this century?

JH: Umm, well, certainly if it was in this century it didn't last more than 15 years, I would say. But they were called jobbers and they, you hired a foreman and you told him this is how much I want to get out of you, you go hire the people, get the job done. I think that's probably largely the way Ashcrafter got to be so highly uh Scandinavian, particularly Finnish.

MN: Because they still had jobbers?

JH: No, but they were just hangovers, like they'd been there and, of course, the union comes in, you got seniority you can't, I mean they got the jobs so they're their jobs. So as long as they're living and they're working, well, that, that uh unit stayed largely Finnish. But, of course, when uh that was all changed uh there was a, there was central hiring done out of an employment office and uh if a foreman, you know, had a need for two people and he would put in a requisition of the employment management and he would uh, he would hire the people. And, uh based on what the needs were and his interview with the perspective candidate. So that, that was the end of that kind of thing or at that point, because the foreman had no control over oh who he, who he got.

MN: And the other parts of the plant would be more mixed ethnically? By your impression.

JH: Uh, yes, uh the ashcraft that I mentioned being largely Finnish wasn't, it was a successor to uh the uh rattan and fiber and all those old, older forms of furniture. And so this group, they were, they were older in age, but uh the ashcraft business came along and they were the ones doing the work, so it, it just continued to exist until, you know, they'd retire or and you'd replace them with newer, younger people and you got whatever the employment manager sent you.

MN: But people tend to stay in one department, didn't they?

JH: Well, we had uh, we had two, two types of seniority. We had plant seniority and departmental seniority and both of them ran concurrently, which sometimes was a real problem. Uh, if, if there was a reduction in force in the department uh, simplifying a bit, but the lowest seniority member of that department uh would be laid off. He would then have the right to go to a master list of the plant or the plant seniority list and bump somebody if there was someone there with less seniority than he had.

MN: In another department.

JH: So that, that would put him in another department. And, uh.

MN: But he'd be low on that department seniority.

JH: He had absolutely low on that department and if the layoff came there, he'd again revert to the plant list and if there was nobody lower, he was out. Yeah, he was a long way upstairs. This got to be uh a problem of absolutely enormous proportions, because we had places where, you know, it was like a domino theory where you'd have one guy bump another one, another one bump another one and you might have eight departments involved in because of one layoff in one department. Because of this, these concurrent systems of seniority. So we tried to get that changed and uh we had limited success. We got what the worse thing was you'd have a, a fella who was, you know, running a woodworking machine bump somebody in the welding room and no qualifications for the job, and our, for our premise that we went on was that if the man can't go in and do that job he's not qualified to do the job and if he's not qualified he can't bump and the union was unalterably opposed to this, at first. If he's, the lowest man goes, that's cardinal rule of union seniority. But we did get them to finally agree that we'd divide the whole plant up into divisions, there was the wood division, the metal division, I think there was just those two first, but eventually we were able to get it increased so that there was a fin, finishing division. And, uh then we got down here to the ashcraft division, that was separate totally, for as long as it continued to run. And, then after that we were able to uh push it a little further and get uh a list of specialized jobs that were not subject to, to bumping like this and uh the, the problem we had with selling this kind of a theory is that uh the bulk of the people on our employee work force was inclined to be up in age, more than anyone else in the area. And uh so the bulk of them had been around so long and head of seniority and they, they could care less about this kind of a problem because it would never affect

them. It was only the new guy on the block that uh that felt a real threat, you know, from bumping. And, uh that had another uh fallout affect in that this was the uh major attraction of the newer people in the plant to become union stewards, because they had super seniority, and got on the bargaining committee because you have super, super seniority. So over the years this.

MN: Because you couldn't bump uh stewards?

JH: That's right. Yeah, that was, when a man was elected steward uh that was kind of a reward was given him. If he'd take on the responsibility of being a steward he uh had super seniority and he could not be bumped. And, uh this is very common in most union contracts, I'm sure. But uh so over the years you tend, you tended to get a whole bunch of new, younger, less experienced, most cases less knowledgeable people in there as departmental stewards and, and from the stewards you went to the bargaining committee, which was I think seven numbers, and they're the ones that negotiated the contracts. And the bargaining committee gets together and they elect the shop chairman and subsequently we had a assistant shop chairman, also. So it all tended to put younger people into this whole scheme, which created problems because they, well, they expected to do things on a day, but, you know, had taken years to do. (.....Unintelligible) youth (laughs) and uh some of the uh older employees resented a lot of this, but they didn't resent it enough to uh get out and run against these guys when there was an election in their department to for a union steward, because after say 10 years or 15 years of organization things got to be a little bit old hat. And, uh those older guys just didn't want the hassle, which is you could understand too. Uh.

MN: Did you, you had started to say something to me about it all came to a head in '56.

JH: Well, the last war camp, war work got out of the plant probably in '54 to into '55 and that was the runout of the, some of the Korean uh police

actions. What'd I say. Work that we got and uh the company finally, you know, looked things square in the eh face, which I think they probably were late doing, and realized that we're back in civilian furniture production and we don't have Government contracts that last like years, some of them, we got to satisfy the woman consumer buying furniture in stores and uh they uh cost plus profit days were gone. You were back in the real world of competition all of a sudden and uh this uh this was quite a shock, when it was finally faced accurately, because uh many practices had, had grown into the operation of the plant that were uh could only be condoned on a cost plus type of basis. Expensive things. Uh, one of which uh the worst single one uh we decided that we could not live with and if it couldn't be corrected, we couldn't operate the plant at a profit. It was that serious. And that had to do with how you compensate an individual who was on incentive work when you take him off of that incentive work and put him on another job, be it incentive or day work, but it was mostly when someone went from incentive to hourly, day work.

MN: And why would they do that? Why would they move from incentive to hourly?

JH: Well, there may be production schedules uh demanded that you stop working on this and you've got to get this out right now, because we need it. And this happened a lot with the war work. We had, you had to make those schedules. And so you'd take a fella off of this job that he was doing, earning good money and put him on something else, and they uh provide provisions negotiated into the contract, which again was agreed to because it was a, you know, the line of least resistance and it would help get the work out and all that. And that was the practice of agreeing to compensate this individual who is taken off of his, what's he calls his regular job, assigned another job, compensated at 100% of what he would've gotten on the other job. And that was, that was determined every six months there was a list published

of so-called 100% rates, in other words, it was the average of this guys hourly earnings for the previous six months.

MN: That he would get on this other job.

JH: That he would, he would get on another job. So, as you can see, this creates an incentive for the guy to slack off a little bit. He's making the same money and uh, uh.

MN: But it'd be for a limited time they'd be on the new job?

JH: It'd be for whatever time was required to accomplish what had to be accomplished. It usually wasn't a long time, but uh there were cases when it was a long time. But what happened was that this when it was first agreed to, you know, it was all well intended like so many things, but it, it uh just resulted in a tremendous slack off in, in eh activity. Uh, we made studies in the, see, and this thing was still in effect, see, in the middle '50s and we made studies, our cost, cost people, which showed that the average return on, on uh the investment in this 100% work when somebody was on it was 40% of normal. So if you've had uh so you're getting less than half of what you were paying for. So early in the negotiations this uh I told the union I, this is during the negotiating, I told them that this is, this is not only just a contract suggestion, this is something that has got to happen and I understand its some dear to your heart, but its got to happen. Uh, there really wasn't that much response when it, when this uh broaching of the subject, but then it, then it gradually got whipped up into the, the uh central issue of the whole contract negotiations. And this was in the fall of uh '56.

MN: And how many people would it have involved? I mean was it saying...

JH: Well, every, well, every guy who was on incentive figured it could happen to me and I would say that uh the split between incentive workers and hourly paid workers was at, at that time was probably 60/40 in favor of the incentive workers. So you had over half of the people that felt this was a real threat

to him. Now, what we wanted to do was drop it from 100% to 90%, so you'd have at least that 10% that would provide an incentive for the guy to get the job down and get back on his regular job where he could make 10% more money. Uh, it, the union would just not buy it, and uh there was a lot of concern among.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE A

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

JH: Yeah, uh it got no where and it, it developed and was whipped up uh, uh by the union as a, yeah, as a real uh well, up to then, now, union negotiations meant one thing, the union was going to see how much more they could get. Well, here's, here's the situation where the company's trying to take something away from them, this had never happened before, not to any degree like this. And, uh it was just something that was totally beyond their acceptance, see. They, I think they felt that the very uh security that they had uh running the union in the area was, would might be jeopardized, if, if they lost out on this thing to the company. And that didn't help any, it made it just worse.

MN: So the union had moral point also or they felt their life was at stake (Mr. Heywood talking,unintelligible).

JH: Yeah. Yeah. It was like asking them to uh, uh forego uh, uh lets see uh taking any account in the seniority and its, its something that's so close to the basic union principles and they never want to retreat, of course. And they, uh they always maintained that, you know, they were going to get this next con, at the next contract negotiations. Oh we'll get this or if we don't get this this time we're going to get it next, next time. Uh, but in the case of this 100% versus 90% article that uh that's what precipitated the strike. Uh, the strike was not over anything they wanted, it was over something we had

felt we had to have. And it was, it was uh long, it was bitter. Uh, not violence or anything like that, but it was something that the company hadn't been through, yeah.

MN: They had other strikes, though?

JH: Yes. Small ones. Mostly involving contract negotiations.

MN: Would they always be around one day of negotiations in October? (Barking or banging in background.) By once I mean if there was a strike, it would be in October when the.

JH: Yeah, well, in the, the uh termination of the contract was October 1, so you'd usually start negotiating in late August or middle August and hope to conclude things before the deadline, because they often took the position no contract, no work. So if you arrived at October 1 and the contract hadn't been agreed to that was their, was their weapon to get a, to get a contract. But uh we'd had, we'd had a number of those, but they usually end uh were settled in a week. Sometimes shorter.

MN: So it wasn't a, a huge or it wasn't a big emotional statement. Those were usually because the contract hadn't been negotiated?

JH: Yeah.

MN: But it wasn't on an issue particularly like this one?

JH: Not, it wasn't sharply focussed as this one was. This was, was really came right down to this one thing and uh, uh when they at the last meeting before they went on strike I said, "Well, we're going to get over this thing, but its going to hurt and its going to be hard, because we're not going to give up." And, uh they said, "Well, we'll see about that." Uh, I said, "When it's all over and this thing is put into effect, which its going to have to be, if we, if we continue to operate from this facility, you're going to find, eventually admit that I was right that it didn't take anything away from anybody, it actually increased their earnings, because it forced them to get

back on their regular work faster." And, and they know due to new, new items coming along, new time studies, you know, there's a tendency to build and this is what happened. But at that time nobody would buy it at all. They even accused me of fudging the figures and all this kind of thing. At the, the last couple of meetings were uh very difficult, didn't make any sense out of them at all.

MN: And you knew that they would call a strike then, toward the end?

JH: Yes. Yeah. No question. Uh, so then when the strike started, I uh in the community Heywood-Wakefield was the bad guy, because we were trying to take something away from the union. The union uh put out a lot of publicity about it. First by word-of-mouth mostly, then they uh put out handbills, then they bought space in the Gardner News, which we finally also did, which is, is a hell of a way to fight a war, but that's what happened. And, uh.

MN: That was the only way you could communicate with the employees, wasn't it?

JH: Well, that's right, because you're, you can't go to them directly as long as you recognize the union as the bargaining agent. Uh, it came a point where we asked them to, to call a meeting and, and uh conduct a secret ballot, election on this issue, which they never done, it was only a show of hands. And the union, the meeting where they decided to go on strike was attended by less than half of our employees. So we felt that all employees should be invited to a meeting, they should have a vote, it should be by secret ballot and we would even offer to pay every employee two hours at their regular rate of pay to do, to get this done. And no way they would permit any part of it. So right then I, I think we all felt that they were a little insecure. And they refused to have a meeting for a long time and it went on about three weeks and the Mayor got all uh concerned and uh he got together with a couple of other people in the community and they organized a citizens committee to resolve the Heywood-Wakefield strike situation, which I just hated to see

happen because I mean you've got enough people to deal with already. Now, you got a whole bunch of new faces and all well intended but uh very green at the situation, not knowledgeable of, of collective bargaining. Can't, some of them couldn't even imagine how, how you could operate this way and in most cases the central thing was I'd say 90% with the union. And we had meetings where they had the company representatives only, they had other meetings with the union only. They had some where we were there together and they were uh, well, it was a nice attempt, I suppose the Mayor figured he had some responsibility to do something, because it was affecting the whole community, the strike. Biggest employer in town, nobody working, uh people had bills to pay that were not being paid, banks had mortgages lapsing and payments on hand. Uh, it was amazing though how many people supported the union stand on this to the point where merchants would give credit to uh our workers and uh who were on strike where probably if I went in there and asked for credit I'd never get it, you know. But it, it was a, it was a sympathy thing. Now, we even uh went further with closing the plant. We started to make tentative arrangements to see oh what were the ramifications of closing the plant and it wasn't just an idle threat. They thought it was and uh the strike went on, they were getting no due from over half of their membership. They'd just bought a new building, the union had, where their headquarters was, they couldn't make the payments to the International where they'd borrowed the money from. So all of a sudden you had the International arbiter from New York City. New faces. Uh, a lawyer, an international lawyer, International's lawyer. Of course, we had the lawyer. And, uh it, it dragged on for a long time that the citizens committee got no where except that you found this member fighting with this member because some of them started to get strongly different views and it, it was a fiasco, and finally we just ceased, ceased doing it. And, uh.

GH: Only one member of that citizens committee saw a way back to the company to.

JH: Yes, yeah, he was an attorney. Yeah, that's correct.

GH: He understood the problem.

JH: One other fallout affect was uh, uh when the strike first started uh there was heavy, heavy union support from the pulpits in uh all the churches, every denomination, which eh after about four weeks eh subsided for the point where even having there, there was a priest was a member of this citizens committee and he, you could see him gradually changing around. Not that we were all right and the union was all wrong, but uh we weren't all wrong (laughs), which is a major concession in a way. Uh, the, the, what really solved the strike, and by the way, uh the union uh reneged on anything that we had agreed upon up to that point, the minute they went on strike, and in the contract negotiations I'd say many, many things had been agreed upon. But once the strike started, it was starting from a whole new base, so you had no alternative, you got to do the same thing. So we pulled the uh 90% claim and reduced it to 80, which was twice what we were getting, we were getting 40 (laughs) And, uh we used that as kind of a basis for it. And, of course, this uh was picked up and fanned up as another example of the company being high-handed, whereas it really it's just a normal procedure in collective bargaining, when, whenever you, a strike takes place and negotiations you usually, both sides do that, they all right now we're starting over again. But it, it wasn't received that way in the community and I was the spokesman for the company, so I was kind of a, a goat on it and a lot of people felt that I was young, inexperienced on the job, they should go back to someone who held dealt with the union before and all this kind of thing. Yeah, which the, the company didn't do, but it fast, in the final couple of weeks, it fast became a game of lawyers and my worry there was that uh its all fine but a

lawyer doesn't have to live with the thing after its over. Eh, a lawyer in many cases, the best of them just don't understand the full ramifications of some things the union's asking. Uh, but what really brought the strike to a conclusion was the uh local just running out of money. And they never agreed to the settlement, they were ordered, the settlement was ordered from the International office. Uh, I'm not supposed to know this, but it did happen that way, and the message came through uh, through the union attorney. He contacted our attorney, in fact, they got together in Lexington for a meeting and that was at that meeting that the union lawyer picked up the telephone, called the business agent, business manager in Gardner and said go back to work monday, that comes right from the International. So, now you got a whole new setup. You got people that have been all fanned up by the local union about this awful company demand and the next thing you know they're telling them to accept it. By that time we'd gone up from 80 to 87-1/2 and that's where it's pegged. So the long range result of this was that the union lost control of the Heywood-Wakefield membership and it never, it never got back, ever. And, uh their control over the membership uh deteriorated seriously and when that happens, if you have a problem, like a wildcat walkout, which we had umpteen of in this period right after '56, uh who do you go to for support. I mean you can't beat the people into staying in the plant working, but if they stage a sit-down strike, which we had a lot of em, wildcat walkouts, sit-down strikes, I would just go down to the department say, "Look, you're here to work, if you're not going to work, you're going to have to leave the property." So they'd march into the union hall uh asking them what they're going to do and the, the union'd say, "Well, what can we do. You're engaged in an illegal act." Uh, then I'd get a call say "Well, I got the welding room down here." And I'd say, "I'm sure you have." I said, "I just told them to get off the property." He said, "Well, will you come down and talk to them."

Which never would have happened before the strike. I wouldn't be allowed in the union office, that was foreign territory. They, they couldn't control things. They knew that people had to get back to work and they didn't want a lawsuit, which would've been kind of futile anyway. But, uh money was tight with them, so they wanted these people back to work, they wanted the dues. So I, several occasions be called to go down and sit there and listen to these people and say, "Well, look I can understand what you're talking about, but here, but you're not going about this thing the right way. You've got a grievance procedure."

MN: Do you have any specifics or just pick one like the welding room or something?

JH: Uh, I can't remember the specifics of that as I, as I, as well as I do the sanding room. Eh, that was the biggest department in the wood division, the sanding room, there were 60 people in that department. And a sanding operation is the most difficult or a grinding operation in metal to be similar to try to set a fair piece rate on, because there's so many variables and uh a guy can make it appear to a timestudy man that he's working hard when he isn't. He can be sure that his machine is equipped with sandpaper that's uh long worn out, should have been thrown away and replaced, so it takes three times as long to accomplish something on that sand machine, sanding machine as it should. And there's all kinds of ways to dupe a timestudy man and the rates in the sanding room got out of whack, I mean terribly out of whack and uh I broached this to the union long before negotiations, like in June. Uh, I said, "I don't," said, "I don't know exactly how far out of whack they are, but," I said, "You got a lot of people in this plant that are very unhappy about what's going on in the sand, in the sanding room, because these people are working four hours a day and earning eight hours worth the money. And, uh the others are having to, to work much harder for half their money." So, so

it set up a little antagonism between the sanding room and everybody else and that's the only way the union listened to me, because they could see some trouble be brewing here. and, uh we agreed with the union, I said, "I think the only way we're going to get anywhere is to hire some outsider to come in and make an impartial study." And I said, "I got one in mind, but I want, I want you to give me a suggestion who this guy should be." And I said, "I will not accept a union timestudy man, engineer, I want an impartial man." So we quickly agreed on that and I had an idea this was going to be the guy uh because they had worked at it at another plant in town and uh I think they had confidence in him, that was the key to it.

MN: And you agreed also?

JH: Hummm.

MN: You did also?

JH: Yes, yeah. So we got him, he made a study and he felt that the rates should be reduced by a minimum 40% uh to get back the productivity you should have that's commensurate with the rest of the piecework operators in the plant. And, uh I said, "Are you telling me that you think we should go after the union and demand a 40% reduction?" And he said, "No. I don't think its uh realistic to think you can get anything like that. But," he said, "I think you should go for 30." And I said, "Well, you're hired to make an impartial uh appraisal of the situation and you're to give me a report and you're to give the union a report." And he said, "I've already given this to the union." Which was a really shock to me, because the guy was working in our plant and I thought that's kind of odd he's gone down and told the union first, but it didn't make any difference because he was a man of his word and he had gone down and told them. And, of course, they blew their stack and we couldn't get anywhere, but all of a sudden contract negotiations come around and that's number one on our demand list. And when the membership voted

acceptance of our contract offer, it was accepted. So you see the numbers were against the sanding room, so the next day, after the contract was ratified, the entire 60 man department walked off the job. They reported for work and the steward was at the gate where they, where most of them entered telling them to stay out. So virtually no one came in, the department went to a standstill, which you know really threw the glove at us pretty fast. What are you going to do? Are you going to exceed or are you going to stand up to it. We decided to do the latter, so we waited uh, I've forgotten there's a procedure and there's some legal ramifications to it, you have to wait so long, give em a chance, give em so many days to come back before you can advertise for replacements. And that time expired nobody came back. I had one meeting with them down at union hall and it was, it was terrible. Although it was significant, but less than half of the members of the department were there. And they didn't have nerve enough to uh, uh resist the steward at the gate to come in, but they also didn't want to have anything to do with any such a meeting as the union called and I, that I went down to. And, uh we, we waited the required time. In fact, I think we waited a day or two longer than that, then we put up a notice in the, all over the plant that we were accepting transfers into the sanding department on a permanent basis, because the employees had, had abandoned their jobs, so they had terminated themselves. And the biggest shock I got was we had one real wild-eyed union guy who was an assistant, he was a shop chairman at the time, the first one that shows up to learn a new trade of sanding is his wife.

GH: (....Unintelligible).

JH: Yes. She was a, she was a big woman and a strong woman and oh I'd had many a fight with her when I used to take timestudies, years ago. Boy, almost as bad as your experience in the welding room. He got hit over the head with a pipe (laughing).

MN: Doing a timestudy?

GH: Yeah.

JH: Uh, she showed up and that kind of cracked the ice. Once people saw, good God here's the wife of the shop chairman coming in so people began to trickle in from different areas and, and uh. But you think you have 60 people, you know, with many, many years of experience in all these jobs and to, to, to think of starting from scratch. Uh, I think we got about maybe 15 or 20 people in there, none of whom knew hardly anything about sanding but, you know, the foreman and the assistant foreman are going crazy trying to get work out. Uh, but it was affecting subsequent departments, because they wouldn't get their work from this one, it uh meant shutting down the finishing conveyor to four day week, three day weeks. It affected everybody in the wood division. Shipments went to pot. Couldn't put out billings, it began to hurt. Then uh we weren't getting anymore applicants from the plant, so we went outside and we got applicants that came from other factories that uh maybe felt that uh an individual might, individual might feel that he was working for another factory but he was, he'd only been there for a year and he was low man on the seniority totem pole and so he wanted to, he, he could get in here, it was a new department, he might come out a lot better by making a change. So we had quite a few of them come around and they uh some of them had experience so that helped out, but it was a, it was a.

MN: Any people from who had walked out? Did any of them come back?

JH: Um.

MN: Or you wouldn't have hired them?

JH: Well, we would have hired them as new employees, but we couldn't hire them with any accumulated seniority, because, because they had terminated themselves. That's the position we, we took, legally. And, I guess it was an accurate one, because it was never challenged. I think we had about two people come back as uh, as new employees.

MN: Do you know what happened to the others?

JH: Well, an awful lot of them uh, uh applied to other factories and uh I know uh practically everyone of these people and I get calls like from Nichols & Stone or other factories saying, "Well, so and so has been in asking for a job and what uh, well, what do you think I'm supposed to do?" And I said, "Well, the only way he can come back to work here is as a new employee, which is the way he'll be coming into your plant, but if he uh if he wishes to go to work there," I said, "All I can do is I'll tell you what his work record is with us." And I'll say that Nichols & Stone got the best of them. I recommended them. But, uh it took us I'd say a year and a half to get over that thing before we got that sanding room up to anywhere near this uh the productivity it had.

MN: And when was that, in the late '50s?

JH: I don't exactly remember what year it was. I would say it was maybe '59, yeah. I had a, a list which I, George looked for and its something that's just gone through the cracks and disappeared forever. But it was a listing that started with the first organizational attempt the union made and it carried right through to the last time that we negotiated, which I think was 1977. Every, every issue, all written down, beautiful. I thought I kept a copy, but I hadn't, I haven't found it so I don't think I did and those files are all gone.

GH: Yes, they are. I don't, went to the dump last summer. Would've been when I cleaned out those labor files. I didn't.

JH: Yeah.

GH: There, there was so much material in those files, so many files full that I, you know, I, I couldn't possibly go through everything and figure out.

JH: No.

GH: We hadn't, you know, John hadn't thought to mention it to me and I'd forgotten about it and so it's gone. There's one thing I'd like to add uh while we're before we leave that '56 era. Uh, As John has outlined to you, you know, we, we were taking a tremendous financial beating on this 100%. You know, we're getting 40% productivity, but we're paying 100% of their former earnings, so 60% loss we're taking, so financially it was a very serious financial problem for the company. But also it was a problem in another way. Uh they, before we went into the war work, World War II, the principle furniture lines were modern, which was called Encore, and Old Colony, you know, the early American maple line and, of course, during the war we could make very little of this. So our national sales force for the uh in Gardner on the wood furniture line uh were on restricted selling. In other words, we, we split, we gave each salesman, you know, maybe I suppose at one time it was mid-crisis as low as 15, 20 percent of what he was shipping before we got into war work. So it, so they stayed on some called quotas right through World War II, then we reconverted it to civilian production in 1946 when John came back. And their quotas were increased as we built production up, you know, on a pro-rata basis of what they had, you know, been their share of, what the orders they brought in before the war. Well, as (...unintelligible) wood furniture production went up from '46 on, their quotas kept getting increased because of productions going up. We were still on quotas, believe it or not, in, up until, through the tail end of 1952. Otherwise, we could sell more than we could produce, but in '52, toward the end of '52 this changed. Uh, so the quotas were taken off, the salesmen were as encouraged to sell as much as he possibly could. We're still principally making, in the solid wood furniture, the same two lines, Encore, the modern line and Old Colony, the maple line. Well, it got to the point where those two lines were not bringing in enough business to not only carry provide work.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE B

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

GH: He'd make the samples to take to the furniture markets, which was in January and June in Chicago and New York principally and eventually we got into the Dallas market and much later we got into the Highpoint market. So we, in most of these lines were highly successful at the markets, so we'd come back from the markets with all these orders. But these lines were new products, so we had to do timestudies on many, a very high percentage of the operations that was a new part, so you had to do timestudies on all these lines. And there was no incentive for them to go to work, you know, they, because of that 100%.

JH: They got that on timestudy, right?

GH: So, so they'd fight the timestudies forever. They liked to stay on 100%, because they could work at 40% of a normal effort.

MN: How were they fighting.

GH: And. Beg your pardon. Well, they just wouldn't agree that the timestudies.

JH: Wouldn't accept the rate.

GH: Wouldn't accept the rate. They'd protest the rate. It'd take forever to get the rates set. And concurrently sometimes they probably would get set a little too high because of all this squabbling going on and our concern about getting the production going, which meant that we would be very, very late in shipping these new lines and it would hurt us badly with our customers, naturally. You know, they'd buy in January, maybe you wouldn't be able to ship even the first shipment of the line until August.

JH: That's right.

GH: Or September. Now, this was unheard of. And the people down south, you know, our competitors in the marketplace with no unions, they'd show their

lines at the same time we did and they'd be shipping them in March or April. So it, it was killing the introduction of new lines. We just couldn't ship on time, so we got a terrible reputation in the trade as being probably one of the worst late shippers in the whole industry. The quality was fine, the designs were fine, everything was fine, but it took forever for us to get the goods out and that is the principle reason for it. So there's another reason why we had to face up to what John's been explaining to you and reducing that 100% finally down to 87.5%, so there was at least some incentive for them to.

MN: Did it work? In other words, once it was reduced a little bit did people produce more?

JH: Well, the time spent at that average earnings rate uh, uh was a fraction of what it was before, because people did want to get back to, to earning what they could.

MN: So it, it achieved what you had hoped?

JH: It not only achieved that, but as I think I mentioned the average incentive workers earnings did not suffer from this at all. In fact, they had quite the opposite, they went up. Mostly due to uh them getting back on their regular job quicker, because they accomplished whatever you took them off to do plus on the other consideration was the, the new rates which uh we were under such pressure to get stuff through that uh the rates probably was set on the high side. But, when the strike came on uh you probably should explain how we lost our position on the floor.

GH: Oh, yes, we uh, see the strike started on October 1, I mean the walkout, they were out, quit work October 1. They did not return to work until the Monday following Thanksgiving, right John?

JH: Yeah.

GH: So there was a good two months.

JH: Yeah.

GH: That we could not uh ship any wood furniture. And we're not even allowed to ship what was finished and packed and, and, you know, in our shipping department. We couldn't ship anything. The truckers wouldn't come in. (Very loud noise, possibly telephone ringing.)

MN: (....Unintelligible over noise).

GH: Is he far away?

MN: He doesn't know where he is, but that's okay.

GH: Is he coming over for lunch?

MN: Yeah.

GH: Good. Uh, okay. So what we would try to sell is, we, we would be fighting, you know, the salesmen to get certain allocated space on the viewers floor to show Heywood-Wakefield Modern Encore, Heywood-Wakefield Old Colony, Heywood-Wakefield Transitional Line or Heywood-Wakefield Contemporary Line. So, so, and they actually did a good job of securing this space. So the strike comes on and they sell out what little stock we have in the warehouse (.....unintelligible) goods and then, as we know, it goes on and on and on and they're not getting any shipments and so forth, the strike isn't settled. So finally, you know, this floor space is valuable to them. It's not, there was no turnover though, there's nothing coming back, so eventually a lot of them just sold off the samples on the floor and bought other lines and they brought them in. We lost our, our space, our showroom space on the retail dealers floor.

MN: And you couldn't get back in?

GH: And we had a terrible time trying to get this back at the end of the strike. Some customers we never got back. Some we never even up to 1979 got back. They had that one bad experience and they just, "Why should we go through this headache again."

JH: They were sympathetic, but when it hit the pocketbook so hard its, you, you got space on the floors its got to produce something. It cost money.

GH: And it cost them an awful, you know, awful headache. Finally, come in "Yes, well I'd like to order this Old Colony bed and this and so forth," retail customers, you know. "When can you ship it?" "Well, we don't know." "We don't know!" "Well, the company's on strike." And finally it got to be such a problem they took the, they sold the samples off the floor and got rid of the headache.

GH: Yeah.

MN: Did both, wouldn't other eh companies have also had strikes? I mean they, you weren't the only one. They must've, these retailers must've been familiar with this story.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Well, you had to realize that a very small percentage of our competitors were unionized. Very very small percentage. Our real competition wasn't in Gardner. To a limited degree, but very limited, it was. It was in the south. It was in, in the south. And other, and some of our competition was other small plants in New England. Like Moosehead up on, on Early American. Moosehead up in uh Monson and Doverbark Broth, Maine, and Swett Cummings up in northern Vermont and uh non-union. But the south, then and now, it just about 99.9% non-union, in North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee. This is true today. I mean it didn't experience the production interruptions that we, that we did with, with organized labor.

MN: Non-union shops wouldn't have any kinds of walkouts or strikes like that?

JH: No. Not usually. No.

GH: Very, very, very unusual.

MN: Where would you rate yourself in the furniture scene in the '50s, in, in this century, anyway?

JH: Eh, you mean as to quality?

MN: Emm.

JH: As to quality I'd say we'd rate ourselves at the top. Of course, a lot of the southern plants are using a mixture of solids and veneer. We were all solid. I, I'd say we were at the top in quality.

GH: Still uh.

JH: Certainly at that time.

GH: Uh, things have changed.

JH: Price wise we are in the uh medium to medium-high. We were not the very highest. Upper medium to medium-high bracket. We had a very good reputation in the trade. We generally advertised.

MN: I got ten minutes. What about size-wise.

JH: Eh, size-wise, so we were, we were small compared with companies like Bassett and the Lane Company and Drexel and eh. We were, I don't know, if you took it from the top down, the top being highest in volume, I don't know where we'd wind up. We'd probably be, I don't know, uh.

GH: Fifteen.

JH: Fifty, 60 something 70, in that area, in that range, I would guess.

MN: How many furniture companies eh, er in the country at then, more or less?

JH: Four thousand.

GH: Four thousand plus.

MN: So you were in the, in the, in terms of size, you was a small, one of the smaller companies.

JH: Well, there were many smaller than us.

MN: What about.

GH: Oh, yeah, many, many smaller than us. But uh they're probably oh at least, at least uh 30 to 40 that are probably bigger than we were. Ethan Allen.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Much bigger than we were than and aren't now. But we had a, a good niche in the trade, you know, and uh our name was probably better known to the furniture consumer than any other name.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Any other furniture manufacturers name.

JH: At that time.

GH: Because of the many years we done a lot of national advertising in, in the, in the uh furniture uh not just in the furniture trade publications, but in the consumer magazines, like House Beautiful and Better Homes and Gardens, and that sort of thing. We were, I'd say, in the middle '50s we were probably maybe uh number six or seven in the amount of money we spent on national advertising. And this company has been doing this national advertising since back oh before World War I.

MN: What abouts you were writing the furniture history of the United States. Where would you, how would you explain your company's role.

GH: Oh, we were the oldest furniture manufacturer.

JH: Yeah. The furniture industry eh in our areas eh, I've forgotten the date but, Coey Furniture was the first furniture manufacturer in Gardner.

GH: Yeah. That was before us.

JH: Oh, a load of years (laughing).

GH: Considerably. But, uh our line because of that problem uh we just developed this terrible reputation for shipping new goods and the minute we got back into production, it was difficult to go back to this dealer who'd replaced your floorspace or his floorspace with someone elses line and say, "Okay, look our troubles are over now, so give us back our space."

JH: No way. "Now, look I've replaced it with other lines that uh I.

GH: Other night when I needed, when I needed you, you couldn't ship.

JH: Yeah.

GH: This guy came in, took your place, he's sure I'm getting turnover, so much money for a square foot of this space we allot, allocated Heywood-Wakefield, he came to my rescue, I'm not going to throw him out.

MN: No, somebody told me something uh, uh shocking eh I heard in passing that someone said the plant in Tennessee was opened to punish the Gardner plant.

JH: No, no. Not true at all. The plant in Tennessee was eh was set up uh to try to get more competitive in the school end of the business. We had outgrown our floor space as much as it was in Gardner. We had space rented at uh, uh the old Florence Stove properties, I've forgotten how many thousand square feet.

GH: Oh, a lot over there.

JH: But we were making the school furniture.

GH: Like half the plant.

JH: Uh, uh welding up the frames in the Gardner, our Gardner plant, hauling them down to Florence Stove where we'd assemble the seats and the backs and uh the handling was killing us. It cost a lot of money to move stuff. And, uh we moved the school furniture production to Tennessee uh, it was, it was the only plant we had in the corporation that was specifically designed to do one thing and do it the best and it really did. We uh, we dropped our prices on school furniture, I believe it was 10%.

GH: Yeah.

JH: Uh, and therefore, you know, Gardner had a big pot, piece of the school furniture business in the country and we were, and it was not profitable in Gardner and after the 10% price drop it was very profitable in Tennessee. Only because it was, it was being made in a plant that was tailored for that.

GH: (...Unintelligible) By far a most profitable operation.

JH: Yeah. I used to tell the union, when they would complain about that. That uh instead of complaining about it you should say a prayer for our newborn operation every night when you go to bed, because if it wasn't for that this company would've gone down the drain. And it was true.

GH: Yeah. It was.

JH: Because Gardner was losing more money than Monominy was making. And uh when Newport got into the act we had brought Gardner back somewhat so that the loss in Gardner was almost a standoff to Monominy's profit. So the Newport was the profit contributor that you saw (...unintelligible).

GH: Well, it was the net profit of the corporation.

MN: Why did the union object to the Newport plant?

JH: It was a threat to their security in Gardner.

MN: And how did you improve the Gardner profits? Did you, by adding these new lines?

JH: Yes, we, we built up the uh, we built up the wood furniture, household furniture production. We uh, uh made a lot of economies, some of which were uh perhaps shortsighted, I know there were substantial cuts made in advertising, which uh had to be done at the time to survive, but it had a long range affect that wasn't good.

GH: But also we, we closed the metal working division.

JH: Yeah, that.

GH: Which was a heavy loser and which former President, Dick Greenwood, didn't want to face up to. When he finally stepped out of the picture we, we uh only operated that metal working division for a couple of years. You know, who's going to be buying railroad seats today. You know, the market they're just like buggy whips, you know, its a gone market.

MN: In Gardner. The metal working division in Gardner.

GH: Well, I mean nationally

JH: Yes.

GH: We did 85% of the railroad seating in this country and 100% in Canada, but, you know, the railroads don't care about uh, uh hauling passengers anymore, you know, what's happened. And, uh then we were making bus seats for General Motors and they were, you might love General Motors as a company or as a stockholder, but as, as a customer they're very tough people to deal with. You've got to have everything there right on the day, on that, on that morning or that afternoon right after lunch or you, you got heavily fined.

JH: Yeah, terrible.

GH: And we, it got to be that General Motors was really the only sizeable customer we had for that bus seating division. And, uh we, you get so you're beholden to one customer and they can buy from some other seating manufacturer and you got a whole division sitting there with no work. It was a, it just got to be too much of a risk and uh and they would beat you down on price to an nth degree.

MN: Weren't you once the major supplier of all bus and railroad seats in the country?

JH: Yes.

GH: We were in railroad, but we had substantial competitors in the bus seat.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Business, like American Seating Company and there were three or four or five others. But railroad seating, you know, went the way of all old things.

JH: And, and bus seating uh, uh a bus seat uh, uh was such a changed animal to what it was say in the '50s. In the '60s, I mean it's a fiberglass shell on a.

GH: Used to make, you know, uh bus seats with real uh, with springs in them and, you know.

JH: Yeah, they were more like.

GH: Genuine, at times genuine leather seats and backs and then it went to high quality vinyls and so forth.

JH: I guess I'd better, I'd better go down and.

MN: I think we, where we had left off we were talking about one of the wildcat strikes in the late '50s and then I was going to ask you, I understand that there was another labor kind of big event in the early '60s as well. Wasn't that a second, not as big as the '56 strike, but uh another important disruption or it was not something big to speak of?

GH: I don't quite recall that (.....unintelligible).

MN: No. All right, maybe I was, I, I might be wrong.

JH: It, it, it may have been uh the uh incident I told you about on the uh having to do with the sanding room walkout, but that wasn't a, that wasn't a strike, that was just a wildcat by this one group of 60 people. Uh there again it wasn't a, it wasn't a, a result of something that uh labor was demanding of the company, it was again something uh the company uh felt it had to make a change in to remain competitive.

MN: And then where was the company moving as you entered the '60s, because that seems to be a big change in our country in general. You know, Kennedy comes in, there's this sort of new feeling.

JH: Well, we had uh in the uh, uh was the early '60s when we uh came to the conclusion that the Gardner plant long range was not competitive, so we uh laid plans to build a furniture plant in Bristol, Tennessee. And, uh we already had, we already had the Newport plant, which was about 80 miles down the line. But this uh particular geographical location was a feeling because of it, it fit our bulk of our distribution. And, uh we found a site that was acceptable, we uh found financing for our uh, uh which was, it was going to be a revenue bondage issue, wasn't it?

GH: Yes.

JH: And, uh we were now well on our way to making this a reality, we had drawings made, we had uh equipment layouts completely made in the plant, all the associated environmental things solved, you know, dust control and water and all that was uh taken care of, and then uh, uh Mr. Greenwood had a heart attack and he was out of action. And, uh the, the directors uh told us to continue all the ongoing uh projects and George was, you know, in charge of the company in this interim. And, uh lets see the first directors meeting that Mr. Greenwood uh attended, after the heart attack, uh we had gone, gone enough so that we, we were committed to making a presentation of this Bristol, Tennessee project to the board and uh we did so and he, he kind of took this as a personal affront. He said, "I haven't been kept up to date on this thing and I haven't, there's been no discussions with me about it and I don't think this is anything that should be undertaken without considerably more work than this, than's gone into it." Of course, tons of work had gone into it (laughing). I mean, we had, we had everything ready to go and, and the cost of it when you figured, figured later when we went into other areas, the cost of this was so low per square foot of floor space and per thousand dollars of what you could ship out of it and it was a sad thing we didn't go through with it. Uh, but uh it was, the whole project was torpedoed really. And, I think the guy felt that maybe we went too fast (loud noise in background, coughing maybe), he was out of action.

GH: But, it was no longer his idea.

JH: Yeah. He was very much.

GH: It came across as our idea and the way he, he was very difficult to deal with at that stage of his life. He had been for some previous 10 years, too. The way to get something, Mr. Greenwood to agree to something, was to put it together in such a way that he would take it that it was his idea, then he could go for it, but not being his idea at this point, he didn't like it.

Now, this would not have hurt the Gardner plant, because I think I mentioned to you at the house, we were going to take, we were making too many patterns in one factory and we were going to take certain Contemporary and Transitional lines up out of the Gardner plant, thereby reducing the number of patterns we had to run and put them into this plant. So when this thing was finally, this second plant idea was finally killed what we had to do was discontinue those lines, because we still had to face up to the fact that we were run, making too many patterns, trying to make too many patterns.

JH: Yuh.

GH: Too many change overs.

JH: Downtime on equipment was a killer.

MN: Downtime?

JH: Yuh, between when you were changing, changing from one thing to another so rapidly and the cuttings uh the quantities that you put through as a batch were so small, because you have such a big wheel to get around before you could cut that again, you had so many items that uh, you know, you wouldn't cut a thousand of something, you'd cut a hundred. And, uh, uh so you have 10 times the change over in equipment, really. You're setting up equipment to run a hundred pieces instead of a thousand. And, uh we, we made studies of all this and it, it was just a very inefficient operation. We were trying to make too many things. And, and it not only was a cost problem, but it was a problem with dealers and you couldn't ship on time and.

MN: That's funny, because you had earlier needed to make more lines to stay competitive and now here you were making too many.

JH: Well, uh the answer.

MN: Or too many in one plant, maybe?

JH: Yeah. We uh, I think we were over aggressive probably in, in expanding the number of items on the line. But, uh we, we knew we had a market so that's why we went after the second plant. Uh, to satisfy it.

GH: That was going to be one to a certain parts of a two-story plant, right John?

JH: Yeah.

GH: Newport was a one story plant.

JH: Yeah.

GH: You're never going to find a plant more than two stories today. Most of them are one story.

MN: So that was tabled in the early '60s then?

JH: That's right. I've forgotten what year that was, but I'd say it's probably roughly '62 or 3, I'm sure.

GH: Yeah, around '63. Yeah, it's uh '63, '64, because we still had the land until Curt Watkins bought the stock away from a liquidator.

JH: Yeah, that's right.

GH: I explained that to Martha at a previous meeting.

JH: Okay.

MN: When Simplex then acquired the company, how did that change what was happening there? The directions it was moving in, the kinds of furniture you were going to make?

JH: Well, the first uh, uh very definite affect that it had was that uh, uh Curtis Watkins was a, a very uh loyal person to the City of Gardner and he immediately uh ordered a halt to any further exodus of, of work out of our Gardner plant. Uh, so as George said that's when the, this land in Bristol got, got sold because uh, uh it wasn't any foreseeable future use of it to us. Yeah, he, he was a strong supporter of the community and he, he wanted us to uh consolidate things. We went into economy measures, because the company was not doing well financially. Uh, he guaranteed loans for us, got lower interest rates than we would ever be able to get uh salaries.

GH: Flat rate. We got flat rate.

JH: And prime rate loans.

GH: The Simplex was guaranteeing them.

JH: And we did, we reduced the debt from what an excessive.

GH: In excessive of five million to seven hundred thousand by 19... eh '71.

JH: Yeah. And he only, he only lived uh on about a year.

GH: About a year after he bought the farm.

JH: After he pulled this off for us.

GH: He had his last heart attack, that took him out. But he, he maintained that he was just showing John, John and I, how to turn that Gardner plant around and. But he never lived long enough to really come down to discussing well, now you should do this and do that and this is how we'll turn it around. He didn't live long enough for it.

JH: Yeah. He.

GH: The plant was still losing money, substantial money when he died.

MN: The plant or the company?

GH: The plant.

JH: The Gardner plant.

GH: The Gardner plant lost money from 1956 until 1971, '71, 2, 3, and 4 we were in the black, but if you average the four years it would be less than 200,000 or somewhere between 150,000, 175,000 on shipping ten million and a little more.

MN: So what's the problem with the Gardner plant?

JH: Eh, inefficient. All these storied, four, six storied buildings. You're competing with people that have single story, running, running larger quantities through the shop, better utilization of machinery and equipment.

GH: And wide buildings. The one story buildings would be wide like ours wasn't.

JH: Ours, our buildings were all long and narrow, the old mill style construction and everything had to go one-way. And, uh there was an awful, awful lot of handling in that plant.

GH: And all the elevators, you know, moving the stuff on the elevator up to the next floor and off the elevators, great opportunity for people to goof off, you know. Waiting for the elevator or they'd stand around the corner and the guy'd stop them, nobody there so you go to the next floor and then they'd, when they got good and ready to put it on the elevator and the floorman couldn't be watching them all the time. He had other people to watch in his department.

JH: Yeah, yeah. We had uh, stringent elevator laws were passed in Massachusetts in the uh '50s I guess and we had to put uh semi-automated doors on the elevators, you know, the peel type that close this way. And, uh there's no question about what there was safety advantage, but boy were they slow. And it, and it was a bugged me all the time, these elevators.

END TAPE THREE, SIDE A

TAPE THREE, SIDE B

JH: Over Gardner, even though it was still multi-storied, three-story buildings, there were, there were four of them that kind of ran parallel with connections in between them. Fairly substantial, but uh it never had any worry about if you wanted to, its, its more efficient to locate some machinery in this configuration. You could do it in Monominy, the plants were all made of concrete, the floors they had tremendous potential floor loads. In Gardner every time we moved a major piece we had to check and see if the floor would support it and if it didn't and you still felt it was worth it to move it, you start in the basement with pilings that go up to support the doggone thing.

GH: Support one machine.

JH: And, uh, yeah a lot of individual equipment was propped up like that. And there were some areas of the plant, like the buildings going down Pine Street, well, uh the top floor of that building had some floor load that was just totally ridiculous like uh twenty pounds a square foot. Because of the condition of the building. And, uh we had an, our insurance carrier came in and rated all the uh acceptable floor loads, you know, they brought in engineers to, they went through it. Boy, we were shocked. Some of the floors were oh substantially overloaded and we had to start moving everything around, you know. They had made the study, they yet rendered the decisions to us. If we had not corrected any and something happened, you know, they, they had their grounds to refuse to, to make good on the policy. And you couldn't afford to have that happen. So many lives involved and everything.

GH: And those Pine Street buildings were built for the handweaving of uh rattan furniture, you know, like the chair John's got out there. That type of furniture. Had one person would sit there, work all day, you know, weaving.

JH: Making up by hand one.

GH: One chair.

JH: Make a complete piece of furniture all himself.

GH: Or one, or one couch. And, if you know this sort of building when you get back to town you see, see the number of windows in those Pine Street buildings oh in electricity uh was just starting to come in so they put, you know, you might say almost the maximum number of windows they could in the building to let the light in. There's a lot of, lot of the illumination was natural light.

MN: Why didn't you build a one floor plant in Gardner?

JH: Uh, well, the first reason is that its far more economical to operate a plant in, in a area where you don't have all the severe winters and all the expense heating uh. There was also a shortage of labor in Gardner.

MN: Even in the '60s?

JH: Yes.

GH: We were the first company in Gardner to experience the shortage of labor.

MN: When did that start?

GH: I'd say in the early '60s. What the middle '60s wouldn't you say John?

JH: Yeah, yeah.

GH: Yeah we'd go to the markets and we come back with all these orders and the salesmen they have to market out on the road and start flooding the orders in, and we needed to hire more people, we couldn't find them.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Work and everyone, you know, like during the war everyone was patriotic so we had, we probably had more people working, especially women working at Heywood-Wakefield from Winchendon, than all the employers in Winchendon perhaps put together. You know, the manufacturing had, but when it came, but, but when we went to start running short of labor, couldn't hire people, you know, we sent employment managers into Winchendon area, Winchendon Furniture closed up we tried to get those people to come to Gardner. No, they'd rather draw unemployment comp. than drive eight miles or ten miles to Gardner.

JH: We couldn't get them.

GH: We even went up into southern New Hampshire, Greenville area and all there trying to recruit people to come into work. this, this had happened during the war years but you couldn't get anybody to do it any longer.

MN: Why didn't they want to work in, was it they didn't want to work in furniture or there just weren't human beings around that needed jobs or?

JH: Well, I, I don't think I can fully answer that. Uh.

GH: I think in the case of a lot of them, they just plain didn't want to work. They'd rather sit home and draw unemployment comp. as long as they

could and then maybe work a little bit somewhere and then go back on unemployment comp. again.

JH: Well,

MN: Was there a change in the kind of workers you saw over time?

JH: Well, the mere fact that, you know, the old guard uh, uh employee that, you know, had served us so well for so many years uh they just started to fall by the wayside, and you, you pulled in uh younger people uh it's a change, because a lot of them were second generation, sometimes even third with Heywood-Wakefield. And, uh a lot of them just weren't happy about living the kind of life their dad or granddad did. They had further things in mind. And, uh the other thing is that I think the, the union really uh caused some problems when they used to make wage comparisons and presented them to the membership and the bargaining committee between what their membership was earning and, and what say the uh United Auto Workers assembly plant in Somerville was getting. I mean, its a wholly different ball game uh, uh the net profit in the furniture operation is minute compared to so many other businesses now and even then. In fact it uh, you correct me George, but it seems to me that we only knew of one furniture company to our knowledge that ever netted 10%, I believe it was Bassett.

GH: Yeah. And not every year, either.

JH: Oh, no, this was just one time.

GH: One, one glorious year. But we did do that in Tennessee.

JH: And. Yuh.

GH: After tax, 10%.

JH: Yeah, of course, that was metal work largely.

GH: Its a different animal, school furniture.

JH: Yeah. And that was an extremely efficient operation. The uh I would say probably if a furniture plant netted 4% it was pretty darn acceptable and you

can't provide your employees with uh the wages and the fringes and so forth on that kind of a margin that uh other people like the.

GH: On that kind of a margin you can't afford to, to, you know, make major improvements in our plant or build a new one story or two story plant.

JH: And, of course, in the later years these uh, uh all this industry was growing up along 128 and you hear about the kind of wages they're paying and that uh, well, we're in.

GH: Digital came to Westminster.

JH: Yeah. So you were fighting a, an impossible war almost, because uh this new generation of workers uh have got more on their mind than boring holes in a piece of wood for 30 years.

MN: Do you think they had a different work ethic than their parents?

JH: Well, I don't know. I've always felt that uh to a large degree uh one thing that's worked to the disadvantage of the furniture industry, particularly in the north and in Gardner, is this old human cry about 'I want to have better things for my son than I had for myself.' And, uh sometimes you wonder how much better off they were the values that the older generation had. And, and there's, and there's no such thing as uh or at least it's very rare to find a, uh the desire in a worker today to make up his mind on which company he wants to work for and devote his life to it, which is the old way of looking at it. Now, oh I've heard it said by different people, if you stay in one company for more than five years you're falling behind.

GH: That's right. That's pretty much the ethic today.

JH: Yuh.

GH: You should move in your career at least every five to ten years. At least. I've seen it in writing.

MN: Yeah, they tell me in my new job that, that the commission lasts six years, but you'll be out of here before then.

JH: (Laughing).

GH: (...Unintelligible) Gardner plant has other problems, too. See, none of the buildings were built for what we're using them for, you know. We were pretty much strictly a chair manufacturer when these buildings were built. Chair or occasionally a, you know, woven reed loveseat, but we weren't making case goods until 1932 I believe we started. So, so we're trying to make do in buildings that were built for a different purpose.

JH: Yeah. There's one other serious problem that uh, that loomed up out of the blue was the tremendous uh, uh fuel oil situation, you know, the imported oils and how much the uh, the oil magnets got the prices up.

GH: That was a factor in closing the plant.

JH: It was a big, big factor. The last full year we operated there our oil bill was \$554,000.

MN: And what had it been eh prior to that.

GH: Oh, under a hundred.

JH: Oh, yeah, cause the oil went up.

GH: Went up in the '60s.

JH: And we used to pay uh oh a favorable rate, 27 cents, 28 cents uh for fuel that we were later paying uh a dollar and thirty cents. A tremendous drain.

GH: Another problem with that old plant, too, was the, the old fashion type of blower systems we had there. You know, it would take the chips and the sawdust away from machinery.

JH: Dust collection.

GH: Dust collection, you know. And it used to go into. They've taken em down so I don't know if you ever saw them, but when Burt did over the north end of the plant, well, there's a huge bin where the fire plant used to be, by the chimney, across the aisle, across the Lake Street from there there's a huge box, you know, oh about as big as John's house.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Higher.

JH: Yeah.

GH: And the dust would all come into these collectors.

JH: Cyc, cyclos.

GH: Solids would drop down and the air, the warm air would be vented out see. But what we needed to do was to put in an up-to-date system called an airmake, air, air makeup, where you separate the solids and you blow the warm air back, the preheated air back into the building.

JH: Yeah.

GH: But to take the configuration and size of those buildings and try and install such a system uh it's going to take tremendous amounts of money. And we actually hired a professional consultant, who I work for now once in awhile, Ross Associates, to do a study of the plant and as far as the north side of the plant was concerned he, he just could not justify the expenditure of the money it would take to straighten out the plant, the, the north side I mean. Well, (.....unintelligible) taken down and we didn't have enough land to put it all one story.

JH: Or two.

GH: Or two.

MN: What about machinery? Had you, not you, but had the company attempted to keep up with modern machines?

JH: Yes.

GH: Yes, uh that's probably one area that we did exceptionally well in. Uh, the, when we had the machinery auction after the plant had closed, uh it was probably the first time that hordes of our competition had ever been in that plant, but they came around looking for, to scoop up buys on equipment. And,

uh that, that, none of them ever failed to remark on the fact that our equipment was so updated, far better than they had themselves.

JH: Yeah. We did have a lot of equipment.

GH: We had the leading edge in Gardner by far on new equipment.

JH: Oh, yeah.

GH: No question about it.

JH: James F. Murphy, who uh actually was the one that bought the buildings originally, he's a middle-man used machinery dealer and uh we bought a lot of equipment through him. Uh, he, he uh conducted the auction, but, and he was glad to be in on it, because he knew what kind of equipment we had. And, uh so it uh, we were, we were in good shape on that part of it. And whereas, you know, years before you'd get a certain amount of employee resentment when they saw a piece of mechanized equipment come in that was going to do three times the work that was done before and only took one man instead of three and that kind of stuff eh that existed at one time, but it was no problem the last 15 years or so we operated.

MN: They, no one had felt threatened?

JH: No, because uh in the first place if there'd been a, you know, a wealth of people wanting to come to work, well, that'd be one thing, but uh the labor shortage was rather accute and I don't think anybody felt threatened. In fact, we used to kind of go out of our way a little bit to educate people when something like that was about to happen. And, uh a lot of times when a beautiful new piece of equipment came in you'd, you'd find people uh vying or bidding for who would want it, who was going to get the job of operating it.

MN: And what about computers? Didn't that, weren't those introduced at some point in?

GH: Naw, they, no, they were, they were just in the very bit, early stages of development when we closed the plant. They've come a long way in the last 10 years. But a lot of these pieces of equipment require uh large volume.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Volumes per part, per operation. So it, it takes a big furniture plant with huge, huge volume to justify the cost of these machines, which run anywhere from computer operated, I believe, \$150,000 to up toward maybe 350, 400,000. And you're going to put that kind of investment in a piece of machinery you'd better be oriented at least 40 hours, you know, solid, every week, at least.

JH: See.

GH: Say thirty out of the second shift (...unintelligible). Get your money's, you know, they (...unintelligible).

JH: American uh Woodworking Equipment manufacturers, which there are hardly any left now due to the current liability laws, they went hog-wild toward producing machinery that would do a fantastic quantities of stuff in a short time, whereas the, the Europeans uh the Italians and the Swiss, the Germans particularly, and uh English, they went after machinery that's vastly less expensive, but it would be uh much easier to set up and it wouldn't do as many things at one handling of the material, but uh you didn't spend a day setting it up, either. And, uh, uh I now remember looking at uh plan, attending a Woodworking uh Machinery Manufacturers Association show down in South Carolina and they were showing, one company was showing it's newest development, which was a machine that would turn out 20,000 drawer fronts a day. Well, you know, that's fine, but, boy you got to have some kind of shop to keep that going (laughing) and at a tremendous investment of course. All computer operated, yeah. Operator sat in a chair, you know, with a big panel in front of him, the stuff was handled into the machine mechanically, handled out of it the same way. Shaped it and bore holes and did this and that and the other thing. But who needs 20,000 drawer fronts a day, you know.

GH: There are only certain plants, like Bassett, you know, doing four or five hundred million a year.

JH: I don't think they made very many of those (laughs).

GH: Probably not.

MN: Is that the roll that robotics would play? Robots would be too expensive or you'd only have to have high volume to use them?

JH: Well, I don't think that the furniture industry uh generates the kind of return that they could ever afford to get that far into.

GH: I don't think so either.

JH: Mechanization. The, the profit margin in furniture is so small compared to others.

GH: I'm not aware of any furniture plants (.....unintelligible) type of equipment. Well, they have a lot of new updated electronic equipment in some places, but I never heard about robotics from uh.

JH: No. Automobiles maybe that kind of thing, but. Well, when, when Simplex uh bought the stock from Heywood-Wakefield and when Curt Watkins got into the, the financial figures of Heywood-Wakefield, which he really didn't do when he bought the stock, it was totally a supportive measure for Heywood-Wakefield and for the community. He had no idea of uh, uh profitability of the average furniture manufacturer. Remember how shocked he was when he found. He couldn't believe that all of us in Gardner had been beating our heads out for all these years to make 3% or whatever. He just couldn't believe it. He, he was truly shocked. But its a fact and uh that's why these wage comparisons with other industries uh, uh kind of misleading to people, because it was never going to be possible to get into those areas.

MN: It's funny because it's a Catch 22, the labor costs rise so you'd like to replace them with machines, but you can't afford the price of the machines.

GH: Well, about a month before we automated electronically uh machines most.

JH: See in the, in the Michigan plant uh when uh at the beginning of the war they got a contract from Ford Motor Company to make uh sections of uh troop carrying gliders. They farmed out sections to different people and then they got them up to their (...unintelligible) Michigan assembly plant and put em together, and these troop carriers, you know, took a lot of people into Europe in, on D Day. And we were making one section of it, I can't remember just what it was. But uh the minute that contract came down and it was a sub from Ford Motor Company, in comes the United Auto Workers and they organized that plant like it never went out of style, immediately.

GH: And contributing factor, too, was that Ford had been making their wooden beach wagon bodies before the war up at Iron Mountain, Michigan, on the, on the upper peninsula, north of where, of Monominy and they closed that plant down, you know, they never went back to making wood again. So all those employees, some of those employees came down to Monominy and they'd been organized by UAW.

JH: Yuh.

GH: That helped bring them in too.

JH: Yes. But Monominy, Michigan is a, a very strong union town and the auto workers certainly uh were not an appropriate bargaining unit for somebody in the furniture business to have, because they were used to such considerably different levels of wages and fringe benefits that uh there was no possibility we could ever attain em, they could ever attain em. We couldn't afford it.

MN: But the UAW organized Ford or your plant?

JH: Our plant. Because we were subbing to Ford, you see. And they organized several other uh plants in the town of Monominy, too. And I guess you're right it's probably largely due to all those people that came down that had been in the union before.

GH: Yeah. (...Unintelligible).

JH: Yeah.

MN: And what happened then when you stopped the contracts with Ford?

JH: Well, they were still there, they didn't go away (laughing).

GH: The union, you know, they, the union was in by then. They stayed there. The union saw an organized plant, but the people that operate that plant today are operating without the UAW.

JH: Yeah. Well, I, I used to uh go out and negotiate those contracts too and negotiating with the United Furniture Workers and the United Auto Workers was just about as different as day and night. I mean, the, the auto workers they're tough, they're big, they're strong and they're also well organized, well informed uh responsible uh have control at all times. The United Furniture Workers uh its never been that way, even in its best days it was never anything like the auto workers. They couldn't afford to be, I mean, it's a much smaller union, of course. But, uh I'm not saying we didn't have plenty of troubles in Monominy, we did, we hit strike after strike. But uh you always felt you knew where your ground was out there, because they had control of the people and if you negotiated an agreement with the bargaining committee and with the negotiator, which who they usually send in from Detroit, a professional. In fact, one guy I used to deal with is now President of the UAW. Beaver.

GH: Beaver, yeah.

JH: And, uh.

GH: Of which they all been through half a dozen schools by now (?).

JH: Yuh. And I got really shocked one time when I, in this conversation with this guy Beaver he told me that they have a social security department, the auto workers, and they own stock in every public company that they uh do business with, that they have organized.

MN: (...Unintelligible).

JH: And, uh, uh, you know, he opens up this thing and he tells me what our, what our earnings were for the previous year (laughing). But which was only good business on his part, of course, but it, its a sophisticated organization.

GH: The only thing he didn't have was what each plant earned.

JH: Yuh.

GH: He knew what the corporation reported. We were a public corporation.

JH: But, uh in as much as, you know, it was tough, much tougher bargaining out there, but it was a known entity. You always knew where you stood and uh, uh we were able to negotiate some things there that nobody thought we ever would, but they could see the, the benefit in it, long run to them. But in the last few years that, that uh, that I had anything to do with the negotiations it became quite apparent that up the line the day was going to come when they said 'Well our people have to have more money. Our union is earning this in this plant and this in this plant and uh if you can't pay that then you're, you're doing business in the wrong area.' In other words, as much to say if you can't pay these people eh you should shut down. They were that hard nosed about it.

MN: The auto workers union?

JH: Yes.?

MN: And did you think it was going to come to that in Monominy?

JH: Well, I tell you I guess I was so preoccupied with what was happening in Gardner (chuckling) I never thought about it too much uh. I frankly thought that the end was going to come in Monominy sometime, because uh either eh one thing was going to happen or another, even the, either the union was going to feel that for the expenditure they put into that operation wasn't worth their time, which I wouldn't be surprised might be what happened, or uh we were just going to have to shut down because we couldn't accede to their demands. And there's no sense in signing your own death warrant. And we had uh the steel

workers in the, in the earlier plant and they were not the hard nosed bunch, but, but more professional than, than the Gardner guys. We had three unions in Gardner, not one. But they, we generated our own power, you know, and we had a, the Independent Union of Operating Engineers Affair, that was independently organized. They never caused an awful lot of trouble. I think there was only one strike, maybe two in the whole timeframe and, and we were able to operate it uh.

GH: With management personnel.

JH: Yeah, with management, all right, because the chief engineer was a management man. He was in charge of the whole operation and, and we had other people in the organization that had some association with operating power plants. But, they, it was a little bit remarkable because the business agent we dealt with there was an employee that we had to discharge, because he, he failed to stay on the job. Here he is running a, you know, multi-million dollar power generating piece of equipment and he walks off the job. And he was fierce to get along with for awhile, but he simmered (laughing) down after awhile. Then we had the third union. We had quite a guard force at one time, a security force and they were independently organized by a individual who had worked at General Electric in Lynn and had gotten himself into some kind of trouble and been terminated. So he decided he'll get back at them, so he set up a union, himself, which he called The Independent Union of Plant Protection Employees. And he went back and struck em (laughing). Uh, kind of a vindictive thing, but he also organized all the security guards at MIT, the next thing and a couple other places that were kind of off-beat like that. Then he came in and organized ours, but that went so long and, and the guy uh, uh liked his sauce pretty well and he showed up at one negotiation session and his head went right down on the paper and he was gone. You know, I, I said to the, the two other fellas, who were both employees in my guard force, I said,

"What in the world are you guys doing with a guy like that? Do you think that's any help to you or to us or anything?" So, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Well, take him out for a walk and I'll meet you in two hours." Well, the walk got as far as Carbones or somewhere and he came back and he was gone on the table, so we negotiated a contract, he was sitting, he was right there at the table, but, of course, he didn't know much. And that was the end of that outfit, they voted them out. They dis, uh decertified the organization. Just a little sideline (chuckles).

MN: So you had to when you would meet weekly for these meetings, you'd have to meet with the various union representatives from the plant?

JH: The only weekly meeting was the United Furniture Workers. Uh, with the other two units, we only met when there was an occasion to meet. They were a small group, you see, there was only...

END TAPE THREE, SIDE B

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A

MN: (....Unintelligible) but I guess that'd be called the union.

JH: No, that was uh a foreman's association, yeah. But it wasn't uh for the purpose of, of uh, uh furthering their own interests. The purpose of it was educational. It was, it was uh the foreman elected their own officers and they well and when it was a real going thing they had uh meetings monthly and all sorts of different eh agenda came up like employee training, uh first aid, you know, predecessor of the CPR, oh and uh oh uh tried to have a lot of informational meetings that tied in with their job. But we also had uh other meetings like uh Kurt Gowdy, you know, and uh sport figures, Celtics, Red Sox players. It wasn't.

GH: Only it had different people on the management of the company uh talk to them on uh some of their meetings.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Like the Sales Manager eh, Financial Manager in the Credit Union, you know. But it educated them, you know, how the company operates and why and what our (.....unintelligible) are.

JH: Some kind of, sometimes if we had a uh a subject that we really wanted to uh lay onto them eh we would uh call a meeting and, a special meeting eh the management wants to talk.

MN: Would their meetings be during work time?

JH: No. And, they, they were usually in the evening. Then they had a number of social events a year, too.

MN: You were telling me uh a little while ago about uh in the '70s that you could see that the company was going to close this plant in Gardner.

JH: Well, eh certainly the handwriting was on the wall. Uh what was, what was disturbing uh we, we did have uh a change in control of the company and there were two individuals that between them uh had uh could call the shots in the company.

GH: More stock than John and I and our families had.

MN: Sorry.

GH: More stock than John and I and our families held.

JH: They had a block big enough to, to run the company and even though we were officers of the company and we'd have these director's meetings uh it increasingly developed that they were going to call the shots and uh, uh they, they seemed to be bent on a program of changing just about everybody in, in management. Uh, middle management, I guess I should say, or from plant managers down. And we probably didn't have the best people in the world, but at least they knew what they were doing and had years of experience and the people that seemed to be selected to replace them, which they seemed to have the final say in, more generally than not were uh people from the financial world. And who knew nothing about furniture, knew nothing about the fact that furniture was uh a consumer good and they treated it just like it was all numbers to them, the whole thing, and it wasn't, it was people. And, uh this, you know, started off slowly, but after awhile though you, you just stop and think how many key jobs have been changed from experienced people to what we have here and uh it, it kind of scared you.

MN: What do you mean that they're people and they're not numbers?

JH: Well, uh you got to uh if you're going to run a furniture business eh and even this developed with Simplex, they, they were in the equipment business largely and they didn't understand fully what a consumer was. You know, a woman, you're selling furniture to a woman for her home, you're not selling uh, uh electronic device to control street lights to the city of Toronto and I don't think they ever appreciated that. And these guys that, uh are mostly from a financial background that er entered into our company uh in the later years just didn't seem to have any appreciation of the real thing that a furniture company was supposed to do. They were strictly numbers people

wanted to see the bottom line and wanted to see it increased 10% a year. Uh they broke the company minimum and, you know, its all right out of the Horton School of Finance, but uh, uh I don't think they ever were gutsy enough to get down to the basics, which sometimes even wondered, made you wonder what their motives are here.

MN: (...Unintelligible) lived on motives?

JH: Why would they want to get involved with the company. I mean, it was in drastic financial condition when they came in uh why, why go through the drill. Most all of them were in jobs that were good paying, good companies. I never figured it all out.

MN: Do you know what?

JH: No.

MN: Then they thought they could pick it up and turn it around?

JH: Well, that was, that was what we were supposed to think. Uh, at times I wondered other things, I wondered if uh they weren't looking for a big fast loss to create to offset profits of the time.

GH: Tax write-off.

JH: Yeah. Like some of them had made a lot of money. These two guys particularly, the two I'm talking about. They had been very successful in their own areas, one a banker, one a financial advisor uh. This one fella he, I used to travel to the other plants with him a lot and quite often I, I'd be told how much money he was losing by making this trip. And he's travelling bankroll. Why are you making it? Out of the goodness of your heart. I never believed that.

MN: Why did they get involved, I mean, they purchase the stock and then by their purchases became?

JH: Well, they uh, I'd say that was the order here.

GH: Eh, eh Callahan came first.

JH: Callahan came in eh on advise.

GH: Peter, Peter Brook.

JH: On advise from uh, uh.

GH: Manager of TA Associates in Boston where he had the uh, the uh venture capital, Tucker Anthony, he and uh Peter Brook. He's a director of Wang. He still is, was then and still is. He was a director of the company. But he came in when we did a recapitalization. We went to Simplex, Kurt Watkins and about five years later his adopted son, Chris, who now runs Simplex, well they wanted their investment out of Heywood-Wakefield and uh, uh so we, we got lines from uh, lines of credit from uh two banks, Worcester County and, and our Bank of New England. But those banks want us to have some long term money, too, and our counsel then was Ropes and Grey, Boston. Fred Mondeau since passed away, but that's one of the most prestigious law firms in Boston. And uh Fred recommended that we go over and talk to Peter Brook at Tucker Anthony and he, he and his associates helped us to get long term financing from uh Lingo Life Insurance Company, you know, on Boylston Street in Boston. And then at one point he, we asked him to come on the board and a lot of other companies he's helped, helped procure this kind of financing for had asked him to go on the board and he had. He got on so many boards of directors that he hardly have any time to run his own business, so he wanted off and he recommended this fella Callahan to replace him and then, as you know, he's breezing. He'd probably much more help to you than I've been. And I had the person at Ropes and Grey check him out, but uh obviously as it turned out he, Roger Moore didn't do all the homework on checking him out he could have. But he was the first one to come on board and then the company was not doing well and the stock came way down where Sim, we paid Simplex \$30.00 a share to buy, buy it back in the recapitalization in '72. By the time Callahan came on board the stock was down around \$12, \$10, \$8, \$6, \$4,

\$3, \$5, you know, and they picked it up at these low prices. And then he brought in another man from New York who'd been running a, an American branch of an English Bank and uh, strictly financial background, he thought he knew everything and he started buying.

JH: Buying the stock, too and down.

GH: As John said, gradually they started really running the show.

MN: And so they replaced a lot of the people in the plant?

JH: Yeah.

GH: Plant Manager in Monominy.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Newport.

JH: And they uh.

GH: Sales Manager in Monominy.

JH: They uh.

GH: One of their, one of their theories was, I think, they never said this, but I think their theory was they'd find these guys on the outside and they, they'd presume they had the credentials and they'd find out what the guy was paid and they'd bring him in at a much higher salary than anyone was paid doing the job before they were brought into the company.

JH: Much higher.

GH: And much, much higher like double or sometimes even more than double.

And, uh then they'd, when they more and more took over the running of the, of the company, they, they let these managers, they brought in these high priced guys, (.....unintelligible) confirmed it, let them run their own operation.

JH: Yeah, yeah. And hold them accountable.

GH: And hold them accountable. And these guys had no experience in furniture at all. And so these guys made all kinds of mistakes, did all kinds of stupid things.

JH: Very often uh to cover themselves they would say well I haven't got the right talent in this area, this area, so they'd say get rid of em, find somebody else, get somebody else, go buy, they'd go buy another man. So the, the whole thing.

MN: So they were kind of like the old subcontracting method? You know what I mean, these people were responsible for making their departments produce?

JH: Well, eh, eh it wasn't down into that level, it was whole plants.

MN: Oh.

JH: But if the plant manager, you know, wasn't.

GH: These two individuals had their own business to run.

JH: Yeah.

GH: And they wanted to spend minimum amount of time on Heywood-Wakefield. Even though they'd bought all the stock, they put these high-priced guys in, now, you, you run the show, okay. All right, as of this morning you can do it, you run the show. Now, I think maybe you ought to do this and maybe you ought to do that, but it's going to be your decision and you do it. And I'll uh, I'll be out here again in another two or three months, meanwhile you got my telephone number and so forth.

JH: Absentee, no way to run an airline.

GH: Management. People had absolutely no experience under our business.

JH: And, of course, it was so obvious uh and it filtered all through the organization. There was a tremendous loss in confidence.

MN: This was in the early '70s? Or mid '70s?

JH: Uh the middle '70s.

GH: Middle '70s up to, through '83 when what was left of the company, which was then uh Monominy/Newport went into Chapter 11 first and then eventually, a couple of years later, under Chapter 7. That was the end.

MN: And what was your role at that time.

JH: Well, I left the company on December 31, '79. Uh.

MN: And when did the Gardner plant close? Wasn't it June of '79?

GH: June of '79, yeah.

JH: That's right. I stayed on through my term of office and, and uh didn't run for re-election.

MN: What was your title?

JH: President, at that time.

MN: Okay. And what had it been when you started?

JH: Started.

MN: In '46.

JH: I didn't have one (laughing).

MN: Oh, so you changed titles though throughout your time at the company?

JH: Yuh. Uh, I, I spent the longest time uh in uh production management coupled with labor relations.

MN: So that was obviously an eh conscious decision on the part of the, the eh the board, the Board of Directors to close the Gardner plant? Well, I guess, they said this is the year. I mean it had been in the red too long.

JH: Eh, yeah, it must, it kind of happened in stages. The first thing oh we, we were trying to effect every possible economy we could to, to keep the thing alive and uh we bought the property in Woodstock, New Brunswick and we moved uh what's called a rough mill up there. The rough mill is what receives raw lumber from the vendor uh processes it into a glued up panel, say to make this desktop out of.

GH: (.....Unintelligible) in those days were dry kilning.

JH: Yeah. Drying the lumber and uh machining it, glueing top, glueing together the panels. Uh, we went as far as we could up there in that operation without uh getting involved in import duties. And there were pretty definite uh regulations on that and we stayed, we stayed just under the line

so we didn't have to, to pay anything. But, uh it was a, it was a kind of an operation that we had talked about for many years, because we were buying lumber from the vendor, it was all coming out of New Brunswick or 80, 85% of it and you'd ship down the lumber, green, usually very green, and you'd stack it in your yard to try to let the, it air dry so it'd take less time in the dry kilns, so you could turn your dry kilns over more. So you were, you were freighting down all this water that you took out of the wood. Sometimes the lumber came in with a moisture content of up toward a 100%, which means that there's as much water in the wood, in weight, as there was wood, so you'd pay double freight. Uh, so we, we, when we acquired this facility we doubled the size of the drying capacity so we had the lumber come into that plant and it was, you know, within very short trucking distance from all these mills up there and we'd dry, not only dried it but we cut it out and mach, partially machined it, did a lot of glueing. So all this stuff would come into the Gardner plant as a net profit instead of a gross. Uh, it took a whale of a lot of scheduling, because you could wind up with everything to make an item except one piece is missing, you can't make it, so it, it uh.

GH: You can't assemble it.

JH: It took, it took some, it took some scheduling.

GH: But, here again, now, this was a one story operation.

JH: Yeah.

GH: Beautiful. Very, very efficient. You, you couldn't possibly start from scratch and build a better place than that one.

JH: No. It was made to order for what we had and it was absolutely fine.

And it was financed by the Province of New Brunswick. They wanted the labor, they wanted jobs, so they were very cooperative when we expressed an interest in milling in there.

MN: And then you were saying uh that it came in stages in Gardner, the closing.

JH: Well, you see that, that took a certain portion of productive uh operation out. It was involved, involved being done in Canada. Uh, and later on we uh... Well, we got into the Panian Plant shortly after that.

GH: Yeah.

JH: And we had a, a line of what we call stack units. Its uh modular pieces of furniture that you could build all kinds of different configurations out of, you know. Probably the best known one is Ethan Allens. I can say that now we don't make it. But uh I'm not going to think they started it, I don't remember hearing about that uh specifically. But that was a, that was the low end of the line. Very competitive. And here again Panian was a, a plant that had uh been making office furniture, it was all rigged up to all kinds of woodworking, but it was single story, uh efficient plant that formerly been own by the Walker Built, the office furniture people. And, uh so we, we moved the slow priced line out there in an effort to be able to up the, the gross, because it wasn't, it wasn't surviving in Gardner. And it gave what was left in Gardner, eh gave additional capacity to put into the higher priced lines where we stood a better chance of getting a fair return. That was the overall thinking. But, uh as time went along uh these uh new guys on the board uh were very impatient at Gardner's lack of response to all these changes. It did respond somewhat, but uh, but it wasn't anywhere near an acceptable level of profitability for these people who, you know, were thinking in terms of what they learned in uh some school more than they're thinking in terms of what can you expect out of the furniture industry. At least that's the way I always felt about em. And, uh we were approached, oh I guess we did discuss the possibility of uh selling Gardner and we talked with a guy in Boston, that realtor. Beale.

GH: Beale.

JH: And he said you'll never sell the place. He said, "It's, it's a dog." He said, "I know where there's thousands of old plants like this that are just a drug on the market." He said, "Look at Lowell, look at uh Amoskaeg uh collection up there in New Hampshire." And he reeled off one after another. He said, "They're," he said "Really never get a chance to, to sell it at any kind of a figure." But we did. Uh, this fella Murphy did. He expressed an interest in it. He came up, went through the whole thing. So we sold it to him and rent it back uh a portion of it.

MN: Did he also get to buy the machinery when he bought the building?

JH: The machinery was auctioned off.

MN: But that, he got it or you got it, I mean.

JH: No, no. He did it on a consignment basis.

MN: Oh, okay.

JH: Yeah. We hired him to do that. Uh, he uh, machinery auctioneers are, are pretty dull themselves and they got more tricks up their sleeves than anybody. Jim's a good friend of mine, but he, he's not without tricks either (laughing). And he uh, he outsmarted himself in one particular case. He, there was one very nice piece of equipment and he knew where he could sell it, so he put a bid in for it uh he said what he would pay for the machine and it was a good price and uh, uh my son Jack was in the business by then and he was kind of watching over this liquidation and he came to me and he told me what happened and I said, "Well, that's fine but I think that in fairness to Heywood-Wakefield that item should be put up for auction just like everything else. Now, he's committed himself to a price and if he thinks he's being all that fair, it'll turn out that way and he'll get it." (Laughing) Put up for auction and it got sold for about 50% more than, than Jim had offered and he had guaranteed some other customer this machine for so much money, so he had

to eat a few thousand dollars on that one (laughing), which he laughed about later. But, uh we sold the whole property to him. Now, he and we went exclusively to the south side of the street.

MN: When was that?

GH: Probably a good many.

JH: You got me on that one.

GH: It's uh '76, '77.

JH: Yeah. We, we pulled out on the north side of Central Street all together and then he uh what did he do lease that to this one, casket maker?

GH: Yes.

JH: Yeah, there was a casket maker in there and he didn't last very long. He was gonna lick the world, but it somehow got away from him. He was kind of a fast operator. And then uh, uh Murphy sold the south side to Nichols & Stone, so, you know, we were a tenant of Murphy's and he just sold the lease, you know, with the, with the property. And, uh so they were our landlord and they moved an operation of their's into part of the buildings and they leased out space to different people. And, uh but a decision was eventually reached where uh in a given, these, these guys had given the furniture division all the time it was going to get, get out of it. So then we had to sell four, four plants. Had to get out of four plants.

MN: The Gardner plant?

JH: The Gardner plant, the Woodstock, New Brunswick plant, the Panian plant and we had a central shipping point in Hornell, New York which uh had to go too.

MN: So that was all in '79?

JH: I don't know if they all sold that year. We had a, they had a time getting rid of some of them.

GH: Yeah.

JH: Yeah, I think it was '79 when we sold uh.

GH: '79, '80.

JH: We sold Canada in '79, because I remember going up to the funeral (laughing). Uh, all these plants were, were financed on some basis. Actually the Province of New Brunswick took back the plant we had there and uh they got a much better asset than they, than they gave us because we invested quite a bit of money in it, but they, there were certain penalties involved if you, if the operation didn't last for a certain specified time. And in deference to the improvements we made in the plant, they waived those penalties, so it was an even trade like a horse for a rabbit (laughing). But, uh and when we got out of the others on one basis or another. Actually, the Panian plant was bought by uh Pennsylvania House, which is a well known furniture.

GH: Yeah. Out of Louisburg, Tennessee uh Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania.

JH: Yeah it was and I think they made a good operation out of that as far as I know.

GH: I haven't heard anything lately John.

JH: So that was kind of the end of the wood division right then and there, yeah. We had a, a, there was another auction to again sell off what was left after we abandoned production. And we continued in the, the only thing going in office was Corporate Headquarters at that point. The only thing continuing in Gardner. And then that was moved.

GH: Moved to Monominy.

JH: Yeah.

MN: And that's when you left?

JH: I left at the end of December in '79.

MN: And what did you do then?

JH: I went into another business with my son.

MN: Woodworking?

JH: Yeah, woodworking, in Winchendon, Mass. Which uh, uh the business didn't make it. Eh, it was a, it was an old setup, but it was adequately equipped for what we wanted to do. We wanted to go into the business of, of providing uh glued up panels and partially machined stock to the furniture industry. Eh, the market for this is good when business is good. When business isn't good every furniture manufacturer, you know, pulls back all his work to keep his own factory busy, never mind the other guys. But when, you know, when business is really hot and he can't produce enough to do what he wants that's when they needed guys like us. But our timing just happened to be terrible. The first six or eight months was one thing, but after that there was a quite a drop in the furniture industry. It went way off and our orders just went down to nothing. And I, this was all laid out in a plan deal. I was going to stay there for uh it was a year and a half or something and then he was going to take over the business and I was going to come down here. So that, that was the plan. Eh, when I did leave uh, uh it was evident that we weren't going to make it and so he, we got hold of the fella we had bought it from and he had a pretty heavy piece of paper from, from us on this and fortunately we were able to sell it back to him and I think of him abs, absorbing all the debts. Which was a quite a stroke of work which I'll give Jack credit for. He did the negotiating with him. That was, that fellow was the one who recently sold, well not so recently he sold, he ran uh.

GH: Sprague Carlton.

JH: Sprague Carlton in Keene eh which was sold to Temple Stuart.

END TAPE FOUR, SIDE A

TAPE FOUR, SIDE B

MN: You talked before about workers coming connect into the company are like a family. Uh, do you think they felt like woodworkers? You know you said the

old reed producers used to make a whole chair, but now at the point in, in our lifetimes they made one specific piece of the chair.

JH: Or one operation even on one piece.

MN: What are they? Are they woodworkers, are they craftsmen, are they machinists, are they unskilled labor?

JH: I'd say semi-skilled. Whereas uh a long, long time ago a, a guy was a, much more of a craftsman. He required a lot more uh all around knowledge of the work. But as, you know, as mass production quirked in uh it cut down work to eh one specific task more, more, more greatly. Uh, but we have people that had done the same job like for many, many years. I remember that old friend of yours, Ed Flanagan

GH: Eh heh.

JH: He was an Irish man from.

GH: In the shipping department.

JH: Yeah. He used to say 30 years in one room. He worked the same job for 30 years at the same factory. And that was quite a while back. That was in the '40s.

GH: Yeah.

JH: I don't think anybody wants to spend 30 years in one room today.

(Chuckling).

MN: Yeah, that's something that's different, but I don't know why.

JH: I think people are looking for, looking for a lot more in life I think than, than being so restricted.

GH: Well, I bump into some quite often, some of our former employees downtown. Martha and, and uh (...unintelligible). (...Unintelligible) they're all very friendly and so forth and uh, you know, we get talking about well what's your son doing and what's your daughter doing and in a few cases even grandchildren are now in the workforce. Oh them, they're not in the

furniture industry and this guy he worked for us all his life and his father before him and his father before him, but they're now they're working for people like Digital or Raytheon or some, a lot of them.

JH: More exotic.

GH: Electronics industry. And some of them are doing very, very well.

MN: Who are the furniture workers in Gardner today, then?

GH: They're the dregs of the, the dregs of the. Well, no they're, the old timers are fine, the ones that they still got.

JH: Yeah.

GH: But the people they're hiring today are the dregs in the area. That's, I talk very often with uh Norman Howlett, who owns and with his son-in-law runs uh Morton Contract on Main Street. You know, they specialize in dormitory furniture for colleges and schools, some of it built-in, some not.

JH: They've done very well.

GH: And his number one problem for the last three years or so he's been a director of (...unintelligible) this has been just one thing, hiring people. And he says its just awful, you know, and I toured his plant about oh a year to two years ago and I used to see some of the people that are working in there, you know. There's a, a guy driving dowel pins into, into wood which is a regular operation in the furniture plant, and, you know, he had long hair hanging way down to here. You couldn't even see the guys face. I don't see how he could see to hit the pins, you know. And, and he, what's happening is they work there for awhile and they'll see an ad uh for S. Bent and they'll go down there for awhile then they'll take a layoff for awhile and draw unemployment comp. and they'll start around the circuit again. And, it's, it's a problem we saw coming in the late '60s and early '70s and it, and uh it, it would've been much more severe much earlier in Gardner if we'd continued to operate, because the uh, particularly in the case of Nichols & Stone. A lot of our good people, machine operators, you know, went over there.

JH: Yeah, they got the best.

GH: But, uh they just, I don't know how they're going to man these factories and I think this is a thought going through that, I don't want to be quoted on this, I think this is a thought going through the owners of Temple Stuart company. You know, should we continue operating or should we sell the business. You know, this, this help problem is getting to be so severe and they've got certain little advantage compared to someone in Gardner, because they're over there in Baldwinville in a little small community, so they don't need all that many people when a lot of them live around the plant and you know how they can get a lot of people to work there, but they haven't got a serious trouble finding people. I don't know what you learned at that, that last meeting you had about, you know, did you get into this area?

MN: We talked a little bit, but since there were so few current furniture workers, you know there wasn't much that those people had to say really.

GH: Yeah.

MN: I think. Uh, they complained about outdated machinery.

GH: Well, that's uh in the area that was very common. I think uh.

MN: And low pay. Those were the two major complaints.

GH: Yeah.

JH: Well, I think the, the, I don't think it does any harm to say this, so I think probably the most poorly equipped plant in the area was Conant and Ball.

GH: Oh, absolutely.

JH: Oh. They had some machinery that was just so old I know one of the principals there told me that uh they had a fella working there, uh I saw him one day and I said, "Good Lord, what's that fella's age?" And he said, "Well, he's 78." And I said, "God! What does he do?" And he said, "He's the guy, he's the only guy here that know how to maintain all this old machinery." And

I said, "Well, what are you going to do if something happens to him?" "I don't know. Nothings happened yet." (Laughs).

MN: That's funny.

GH: I don't think, I don't think they had bought a new piece of machinery since about 1930. If then.

JH: Well, it was our machine, our machinery auction uh generate quite a bit of cash, because we had some fine stuff. Uh, I know that they, those people, Conant and Ball, they did get an appraisal of their machinery and they were shocked cause they were kind of thinking in terms of what had happened in our case. And, uh they, they were just totally shocked it was so little money. But by that time, you know, a lot of the furniture industry had gone out and there'd been auction after auction after auction and so there was a, you know, huge supply of this kind of machinery and the stuff that's over 50 years old, junk metal that's all. Even though it could perform.

MN: How did you make people feel connected to the finished chair or the hutch or the, you know, the dining room table and feel connected enough to care about the quality of their work? Or maybe that's not necessarily an association, but I assumed to care about the quality they'd have to feel like they were making a chair and not just boring holes in a seat.

JH: Yeah. Well, I think that's something that uh used to exist with the older employee much more than uh has, you know, since the next generation or two generations have come in. But it's kind of hard, it's a difficult thing to do when a fella is standing on one leg on a single turtle boring machine punching holes in a piece of wood. Uh, how do you create that ending. Now, we, just one example, we tried to do some of this, we, we had an exhibit at the uh Worlds Fair in Flushing Meadow, Long Island back, how many years ago?

GH: Late '60s I think it was.

JH: Yuh. And, uh we hired a designer, he designed this very attractive display that was going to be put down there. And we took a portion of the area that wasn't being productively used and we set the thing up in Gardner. Had it all set up. And, uh had a tour of uh first all are own employees to look at this, and then we had an open house, you know, those kind of things to try to help the image a little.

GH: And back in the uh around 1951, '52 we had an open house, you know, for the employees' families. We had a wood tour and a metal tour, so the families could come in and see where their husband or wife was spending their, their working days. A complete tour of the factory. And it was well, very well received uh.

MN: I just saw the photographs at the Library of that tour, in the file draws.

GH: Yeah. In two books.

JH: And we did it at other locations also.

GH: A lot of our employees bought furniture. We, we would sell to an employee at our wholesale price.

JH: Plus the Mass. sales tax.

GH: There were a lot of our employees or most of our employees have some of our furniture.

JH: Yeah.

GH: There's some of them living in the Heywood Place, you know, the north side, the first building that was done over. They've had me, well from some of their meetings they've asked me to come up and see their apartment. They says "Welcome to the Hilton Heywood-Wakefield." That's almost all (.....unintelligible) everything that's in there. So they'd say no, it was good.

MN: What do you think of those apartments? What do you think of the apartments, of the conversion?

JH: Well, I wouldn't want to live in an apartment like those, you know, compared to living in a house, but a lot of our people who are there and other people who I know in the community who moved in there are very happy. I have yet to hear the first person uh find fault with it.

MN: It's funny to think of people living in the factory, isn't it?

GH: Yeah, but you wouldn't know it was the factory, you know, if you take a tour through there uh you see certain things. Like some of those metal staircases, John, on a, on Central Street on the south side are still there but other than that you don't, you don't see uh any. If you just take them in there blindfolded and all mixed up, you didn't know where you were, and they let you out in there, your eye wouldn't know where we were, you wouldn't recognize the place.

JH: I haven't been in.

MN: Any uh suggestions as we put together an exhibit about the company as to what kind of story we should be telling or what, what should be communicated to the public about the company?

JH: Eh, what, what is the exhibit eh aimed at?

MN: In part to try to tell some small part of the history of the company. At the Gardner Museum and at the Heritage State Park.

GH: And the writeup is going to be at the museum.

MN: Em heh.

GH: We're going to, we're going to lend, John and I are going to lend some pieces of furniture to go in those, the exhibit. Museum.

(....Unintelligible).

JH: I don't know quite what to say to that uh.

MN: It's a hard question to answer on the spot.

JH: Uh... You're, you're going to be, if it were, if these people were a generation older I'd say that you'd be surprised how much they do know about

the history of the company, but uh you're in a new ball game now. And, uh I don't know if I read this right, but I detect that uh furniture making is uh could becoming sort of a dirty word. I don't think it pays enough money and uh chances for advancement aren't that great.

GH: Monotonous job.

JH: Yeah, monotonous, repetitive.

MN: But it is, isn't it?

JH: A lot of it is.

MN: So that's what I'm trying to get in my interviews from workers, why did they continue to do it? There was something more than just that repetitive job. Whether they liked the guys they worked with, which was the main part of it or.

GH: Oh, I think they, I think they did and I think that came out of some of those meetings that I, I was there, you know. A couple people got up, one was a woman, you know. This was like a, it was like our family, you know. But, you know, coming to work was a pleasure, it was like an extension of our family, coming to work here. Many, my many very good best friends work here and I work here and we all enjoy it. We liked it.

JH: I, I've got to mention that point uh, uh a lot of the older people, I'm saying older, older than me, now, even when they retired from the company quite a few years ago, uh would have, would have, make statements at the time of retirement like uh oh "I've enjoyed working here an awful lot and I wish you a lot of luck and, you know, you got your problems." And then they'd get into a kind of a nostalgic area like uh, well, you know, "It used to be years and years ago that work was fun. It was, it was just a fun place to go to, everybody got along and coming to work was fun. But working isn't, work isn't, hasn't been fun lately." Well, you're in a different world there. I think the worst thing about it is that the company, you know, was no longer

able to deal directly with its own workers. You were prevent from doing so really. And I think that uh that was an important thing that we lost. I mean we would have, we in, in an economy move at one point in the '60s eh the corn roast was knocked out, the Christmas Party that we gave at the theater was knocked out for the employees.

GH: Christmas Party for the children of employees every year.

JH: Yeah. It was a huge affair.

MN: Maybe that was not an economy in the long run.

GH: All got. They all received gifts and Santa's there and so forth.

JH: And, uh and these gifts were, oh I don't know, a mere pittance they were real good, we made up our minds a long time ago, if we can't give something good then we're not going to even go through with it. But, uh, uh we reinstated some of these things after 1966 in an effort to kind of rebuild a kinship and a, a feel, more better feeling of family. And they just weren't the same. Eh, we had a Christmas Party that almost was a disaster. I mean, it just, eh I don't think it was appreciated at all, it was like it was about time, why didn't you do it for the last four years, you know. Not what you're doing now. And when we re-instituted the corn roast it was nowhere near the affair that it used to be. Uh, part of its the times, everybody's got more things to do, you spend more time with your family.

GH: Travel more.

JH: And some of these uh, yeah, you're more flexible, move around more. It's just uh, I don't know if you can blame all of it onto anyone, it's just a combination of a lot of things that have, have changed.

MN: One of those things that, do you think the President's message was a connection between management and the workers?

JH: I don't know how important it was uh it uh, sometimes, you know, you tried to eh put across some specific measure, a message, excuse me, and uh

maybe it uh wasn't a message that they wanted to hear. But you felt that it had to be said anyway, so you'd do it and uh I'm sure that a lot of them probably didn't get received totally positively. I think it's a nice idea, but I, I don't know what the success rate of that should be called.

GH: But it was well, well read, you can count on that.

MN: Yildiray is there anything you want to add?

YE: I eh heard that some workers eh stole furniture from the uh factory. Did you eh, eh know about that or were you aware of that?

JH: At what particular time uh would you know?

YE: Eh.

MN: Just in general, people would say that, nobody, of course, was going to name names or dates, but they would say people really stole a lot of things from the company.

JH: Well, we.

MN: Especially towards the end.

JH: Oh, toward the end it was horrendous. Uh, not only furniture. Uh, I got a call one day from uh your Headquarters, the fire, the fire department and uh I said, hey John there's a fella on the fifth floor of the flat iron building and he's letting down plastic buckets loaded with electric girdles. He said, I'm watching him here, right out the window. Well, of course, by the time you get over there, he's long gone, you never know who it is. But, uh, uh along toward the end, Roger Johnson, who was in charge of production control, he was finding an increasingly number of cases where so many items went into the shipping room and when you went to ship em they weren't there. And, uh if anything our records were more accurate at that stage than probably ever been. And, but uh it was awful difficult to try to pin anything down. Uh, Murphy, the equipment uh guy that bought the buildings said to me one day, "Do you realize how much equipment you're losing, that's going out the door?" And

I said, "Not in all, I don't think so." And he said, "Well, I have been contacted by somebody who is an ex-employee of yours and he told me where I could find about \$10,000 worth of equipment that and small tools that has been accumulated over a period of time." And uh I said, "What are you going to do about it?" And he said, "Well, uh I'm going to try to take him up on it and take a look at it." But it never happened, I mean the, the guy never eh somebody just told him this, but he never saw it and he never heard anything more about it when he tried to follow it up. But you have to assume that there's something to some of this, particularly.

MN: Had it happened all along?

GH: No.

JH: No, I don't think so.

GH: The surge in thievery was at the end.

JH: Yeah.

GH: The last six months or so.

JH: Oh, we'd get isolated cases, but uh.

GH: Like, oh sure.

JH: We had a, a security guard one time that wanted to get himself a bedroom suite, so he was taking one piece of a bed at a time when he went home every other night. You know, this kind of thing. But, uh.

GH: The police uh like I can remember one time they caught people uh putting furniture out of uh one of the windows onto Pine Street.

JH: Yeah. Yeah, but they, those were isolated cases in the, in the old days.

GH: At the end there was tremendous.

JH: At the end everybody was out for themselves.

GH: Yeah. Like for example we had two large anvils, one of them much bigger than the other, the large one weighed probably 800 pounds.

JH: Yeah.

GH: And it was there Friday night and Monday morning it was not there.

JH: Yeah.

YE: What I want now to ask is uh we heard that um the decision of opening a plant in (....unintelligible).

MN: Oh, I had asked him about that.

YE: You asked that question?

MN: Yeah. This is, this is what something we had heard recently and when I asked you that it was a parchment to the strike and.

JH: Oh, that.

YE: (.....Unintelligible).

JH: The Tenne, the Tennessee plant. Well, what would it be revenge for?

MN: For the strike.

YE: It was uh.

JH: Oh, but this was, this was open before the strike started. I'm not sure it was opened, but it was underway.

GH: It was underway. We had the first year operating down was '58.

JH: Yeah, but it was, it was underway, because uh, uh that was uh, that came on the table at the time of the strike.

YE: That's interesting, because in Lawrence the same thing happened, the textile mills moved to uh South, North Carolina and South Carolina and so forth. Because of the cheap labor and so forth.

GH: Well, the main reason we explained to Martha that we went to Tennessee was we were making the school furniture in Gardner, but we, we didn't have space enough, you know, to manufacture in a straight-line operation, so we were doing certain operations on one floor, certain operations on another floor. Then we'd take the frames down to the old Florence Stove plant, down where Simplex's Headquarters is now, and we rented all kinds of cutup space down there. We were spending so much money moving this, these parts around

that the net result was we were losing money on every piece of school furniture we made. So we put the plant in Tennessee, one story, straight-through production, uh and we reduced the prices 10% and we made good money down there. Some years 10% uh after tax, or in other words, 20% and even a few years better than that pretax.

MN: So would it have been worth it in the end just to keep that one plant going? I guess you couldn't.

GH: Well, certain.

JH: Well, other things happened down there that made that plant situation far less attractive. Uh, the United Furniture Workers went down there.

GH: Got into the plant.

JH: And they made about four attempts. Uh so, other unions did too, but uh the United Furniture Workers finally did win a representation election. And uh they sent down uh well the, the man in that area that was negotiating for the union, I've forgotten what his title was, but he was, he was the guy that when you sat down to negotiate he came from some, sub-office of New York and uh, I think he was stationed in Memphis or somewhere. And he would come in.

GH: Kennedy.

JH: Yeah, Kennedy. He'd come in uh the night before and he and the committee would get together, I mean of our employees. And, uh then we, they'd come to the table and we'd have trouble right from the start. And it was eh really two things. Number one, these people knew nothing about unionization. How it runs. They thought that the minute they got the union they run everything. I mean it was in their mind this way and you couldn't kill it. Uh, and the individual that came from the outside to sit in on this meeting had no semblance of control over the committee. Uh, they were, they would tell him to shut up right at the table, right in front of me when we were trying to negotiate they and he was supposed to be running the show. So it was totally

out of control. Eh, in that respect, worst than Gardner by far and uh as crazy as it seems I, I even uh on a couple of occasions uh tried to get the Gardner Union to do something with the International to send somebody down there that can get this thing under control, so that we can get some kind of a contract going and get into business. But it got to be every time there was a contract negotiation period, there was a strike. And strikes down there are wild.

GH: Gun fire.

JH: They'd shoot the water tank we had, you know, full of holes so we would see that all these sprays coming up from the water tank. They had shot up the uh power entrance, the transformers, you know, people down there are different. And eh they just wouldn't settle for anything less than some other company, you know, totally unrelated area work was getting because his brother-in-law worked over there and if he can make \$8.00 an hour, why can't I earn \$8.00 an hour and I'm only earning \$3, \$3.50 or whatever. Eh, it was just eh we made a couple attempts, I had friends in the Federal Mediation Service, you know, through all the years you meet a lot of different guys, and I, I got hold of.

GH: McNally.

JH: McNally. I said, "For Gods sake send somebody down there that can grab hold of this thing." I said, "Eh, there's just, it's going nowhere. We're not going to be able to stay here, that serious." And uh now the guy from the Federal eh Auxiliation Service, Mediation Service came in and these guys would just treated him like a damn yankee, you know, and wouldn't pay any attention to him. Eh it was real frustrating though. The negotiations down there were the worst of any of them, at any time, because you, you never knew when you went out, left the office to get into your car at the end of the day, somebody's going to take a shot at you. It was uh, a whole new world.

YE: In uh Lawrence also some particular companies did not let um unions come in they say. Some workers, some former workers tell me that, oh in that company guy wasn't in the union. Was it such a thing, though, I mean would it be possible that you wouldn't let those unions come in the company?

JH: You mean represent the people?

YE: Yeah.

JH: Well, that, that uh really is the sole prerogative of the workers. They have a right to, to organize the plant if uh if they so desire.

YE: Yeah I understand that.

MN: Well, Simplex for example doesn't let the union in. That's what they say here.

JH: Well, uh you, you can word it that way, but what you're really saying is that the workers are, the union has never been able to get a majority of the workers to vote for them. That's what it really is.

GH: Yeah.

JH: Of course Simplex doesn't want a union. We didn't either. But uh because your, your building got.

GH: They ain't got one, they lost the elections over there.

JH: The unions.

GH: Yeah, twice.

JH: Yeah. Well, this happened a lot of times...

END TAPE FOUR, SIDE B